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I S H M A E L.

CHAPTER I.

‘THE HAREVST IS PAST, THE SUMMER IS ENDED.

PEN-HÖEL, the old château of Pen-Hoëï, reared its steep roof and conical turrets in the midst of a land of orchards, and hill-sides, and marshy fertile meadows populous with cattle, and narrow lanes, with here and there a cluster of old stone cottages and a dingy old inn, which called itself a village. The cottages were substantial and roomy, the barns and rickyards had a wealthy air. Here there was a flock of turkeys in a field, there a procession of gray-brother geese marching along a lane. Yonder, across the salt meadows, the shallow winding streamlets, shadowed by the gray foliage of many a willow—a broad stretch of wet sand glistened in the light, and far away beyond the level sands glimmered the gray of a distant sea.

This was Brittany; and the house of Pen-Hoël was one of the oldest châteaux in the province, and the man who owned it counted himself one of the best in the land. He was the descendant of a good old Breton family, a race that had never been rich, and which had been going downward financially for the last hundred years. But Raymond Caradec of Pen-Hoël did not value himself by the length of his purse. The traditions of his family were to him as gold and silver are to other men. He never forgot to assert his superiority to the common herd. It seemed to him that all the honours and achievements of his race, from the days of St. Louis, had been lying by and accumulating at compound interest to swell his dignity.

Hard for such a man as this to taste the flavour of dishonour. And yet such a cup, bitter as gall, had been given to him to drink, in days gone by, when the tall stalwart lad yonder, dark-haired, dark-browed, sullen, was a little child. The boy looked a somewhat difficult subject to-day, as he lounged in a moody attitude against the gray old stone parapet, clothed with ferns, coloured with lichens, rich with the slow growth of ages. He leant with folded arms resting upon the stone, and his handsome dark eyes looking far away to that silvery light upon the sea, beyond the barren

waste of wet brown sands. Far away on his right the fortress of Mont St. Michel frowned against the sky, a conical mass of granite rock and granite towers, looking like an Egyptian pyramid in the distance. Along the green valley wound the shallow, sluggish Couësson, the stream which divides Normandy from Brittany, and on an inland summit the white houses of Avranches flashed in the sunlight, reminding the lad yonder of a city that is set on a hill, and cannot be hid.

The château of Pen-Hoël stood upon a picturesque height, a green cliff which rose abruptly from the fertile level below, and thus commanded a wide view over the pastoral country, and away to the rocks and the sea, Tombelaine, Mont St. Michel, Cancale. That broad gravel terrace on the height was a delightful walk for a September afternoon such as this, the air clear and mild, the sky a soft, mournful gray, touched with sunlight towards the west, an odour of dead leaves and burning turf from the village in the green valley below.

Between this broad terrace and the château there was a garden, a garden rich in such flowers as flourish abundantly in that genial climate. The nine long windows and glass door of the ground floor, the ten windows of the upper story, looked

upon this garden from the gray stone front of the château. At each end of the building there was a Norman tower, with a conical roof, and in the middle of the façade over the glass doorway there was a cupola surmounted by a gilded vane. Under the cupola hung the big bell of Pen-Hoël—a bell that had sounded many a call to arms in days gone by, but which now rang only for breakfast and dinner.

In days gone by, days of adventure, danger, honour, fame. But the days upon which Raymond Caradec brooded with sad and bitter memory this afternoon, as he paced slowly up and down the terrace, were days of trouble and vexation, pain, grief, shame, dishonour; days which he would fain have forgotten, which he might have forgotten, perhaps, had not the presence of this overgrown, idle, sullen youth of eighteen for ever reminded him of that miserable period of his life.

Monsieur Caradec had been married twice. His second wife was in the salon yonder, a pretty fragile-looking young woman, sitting at an open window reading a novel, and looking up every now and then to talk to her two children, who were playing together one minute, squabbling or fighting the next, now rushing out upon the terrace, now running back into the salon.

His second wife was pretty, fair-haired, delicate, somewhat insignificant in face and figure. His first wife was superbly handsome—a Judith, a Cleopatra, a queen among women—tall, moulded like a statue, every line and curve perfection—eyes of darkest lustre, raven hair, classic profile, peerless complexion. She had all these charms of face and figure, but she was unfortunately the possessor of a diabolical temper; and after leading her husband a life of unspeakable torment for three years, she ran away from him with his treacherous friend and her lover, just as Caradec of Pen-Hoël began to flatter himself that he had got the mastery of that passionate nature, that he had schooled the wildling to endure restraint and domesticity. Guilt soon learns to lie. Coralie d’Estrange was all candour and innocence when she was given to Monsieur Caradec, a girl fresh from the galling restraints of an enclosed convent, glad to marry anybody who would give her liberty of speech and action, fine clothes, and a little gaiety; but, educated by her seducer, the frank and too outspoken girl became the sullen, crafty woman, cunning enough to hoodwink even keen-eyed Raymond Caradec.

Thus it was that although there had been much bitterness between husband and wife, and although

Raymond knew that his wife hated him, her flight with his false friend was a thunderclap. He had believed in his friend's honour in the abstract, and the seducer had played so deep a game, had so steeped himself in hypocrisy, and had so coloured his every word and every act with falsehood, that he had appeared to the husband as that one man whom his wife most detested. There had not been a flaw in the acting of their comedy. And one fine morning they vanished, slipped quietly away in the broad noon, carrying the three-year old boy with them. Before Raymond knew that this triple disappearance, which might mean an accident by land or sea, really meant an elopement, Lucien Rochefort and his mistress had sailed for the Isle of Bourbon, where the traitor had an estate.

At this distance the lovers may possibly have considered themselves beyond the reach of Raymond Caradec's vengeance. If so, they poorly understood the master of Pen-Hoël. He followed them to their voluptuous retreat in the Indian Ocean, their fairy palace in a land of volcanoes, a white-walled villa, with its back against the mountains, and its feet in the sea. He followed them there as he would have followed them to the farthest confines of earth. Within an hour of landing

he challenged his false friend, met him next morning at sunrise, and ran him through the heart, in a romantic dell on the shore of that tropical ocean. He left the island by the next steamer, with the traitor’s blood hardly dry upon his sword, and he left his wife and son without ever having seen the face of either, or made a single inquiry as to their circumstances.

It was only when the island was a vanishing speck upon the horizon line—a spot of darkness on the blue of the ocean, which might be earth or cloud—that Raymond Caradec remembered the existence of the child, and that in so leaving the island he was leaving the boy in his mother’s keeping, and leaving him to all the chances of evil naturally involved in such companionship. But even this consideration did not soften him.

‘She chose to steal him from me,’ he said to himself, with a scornful shrug of his shoulders. ‘Let her keep the viper she hatched. What should I have to do with him?’

He included the unoffending child in his savage hatred of the woman who had deceived him. She was pure and innocent when she bore him that only child; but there had been no love between them even in those early days, and he had never loved the boy. Six months after the child’s birth Rochefort

returned from the Isle of Bourbon, where he had been summoned to his father's death-bed soon after leaving college, and where he had lived for some years. He appeared unexpectedly one day at Pen-Hoël, was welcomed warmly by its master; and in the companionship of his old college friend Raymond found a resource against the gloom and dreariness of a loveless home. He talked of his wife's faults freely to his friend, made him arbiter in their disputes; and he was secure in the belief that the two hated each other. And now love and friendship had both proved false, and the man who had been to him as a brother was lying in his early grave on yonder tropical shore, and the woman who had been his wife was an outcast.

What was the after-life of the woman and the child so forsaken by their natural protector, so given over to evil destiny—a prey for the gods? Yonder dark-browed boy, Sébastien, could tell what that life was like, if he cared to unlock those firm lips of his, to tell the story of unmerited sorrow, unmerited shame.

Madame Caradec did not remain long in the Isle of Bourbon after her lover's death. Sébastien had only the faintest, dimmest memories of that volcanic island—a vision of lofty mountain-peaks, snow-clad and dazzling; a fertile shore, fruits,

flowers, such as he never saw in his older years ; a blue, bright sea, and curious black faces, friendly and smiling, with flashing teeth and strange rolling eyes. It was all as a dream. Such things had been a part of his life, and he a part of them, enjoying the sea and the flowers and the hot blue sky, with a kind of half conscious sensuous existence, like the life of any other young animal rolling upon the sunlit sands.

Then came a long experience of a ship—storms and fine weather, rain and sunshine. He remembered that part of his life vividly. The sailors, and how good they were to him; and how he loved a certain three—two blacks and a white—who were his special friends and protectors.

His mother? Well, he hardly knew of her as his mother in those days—had never been taught to call her by that name. He knew that there was a handsome lady on board, who wore fine gowns and sparkling rings, and who lolled all day in a low chair on deck, under an umbrella, fanning herself, and talking to a gentleman who was always smoking. The lady spoke to Sébastien sometimes, the gentleman never. The lady’s French maid looked after Sébastien: dressed and undressed him, put him to bed in a berth on the top of her own—a funny little berth, with a round scuttle port

staring in at it like a giant's eye, an eye that watched him sleeping or waking, and of which he felt sometimes a strange, indescribable fear, as if it were alive and a thing of evil.

The ship was a steamer. A horrible monster in a black and fiery pit—a monster with gigantic arms and legs of shining steel, a living thing that throbbed and plunged by day and night—drove the great ship through the water, and very nearly drove Sébastien out of his mind when he tried to understand what the great fiery thing was and what it did. Even in those days he had a passionate yearning for all kinds of knowledge, to understand the meaning of all things: why the stars shone, and what they were; why the waves rolled and rose in this way or that, and the nature of that strange white light which gleamed and flashed upon the ever-moving waters; where the world ended, and where dead people went.

He questioned the sailors upon all these subjects; and his favourite blackie, who had a vivid imagination, answered him very fully out of his own African inner consciousness, enriched by the superstitions and traditions of his race; so that, when he landed at Havre at four years old, Sébastien Caradec was steeped in Malagasy folk-lore, and knew very little else.

His next memories were of a house among trees and flowers—not such trees or such flowers as he had known yonder, by the Indian Ocean. Everything here was on a smaller scale, and of a less lavish loveliness. The house was small, but it was full of prettiness and bright colour. The garden was only a lawn, with a bank of flowers and a belt of foliage surrounding it, and a fountain in a marble basin in the middle of the grass; it was so small that Sébastien had explored its innermost recesses in ten minutes, and had to begin again and go on beginning again all day long, since his sole amusement was to be found in this garden; save on those rare occasions when Lisette the maid took him for a long walk in the big wonderful city a little way off—a city of streets that had no end, of houses that seemed to reach to the skies—horses, carriages, fountains, endless shops, numberless people, a perpetual trampling to and fro, and the sound of trumpets and drums, a bright vision of helmets and prancing steeds, or a little troop of foot soldiers marching by, with a giant in front, swinging a gilded staff, and strange-looking men in white leather aprons, marching two and two. Then came the splendour of carriages flashing past, carriages drawn by four horses. The Citizen King was ruler in

that old-fashioned Paris, and Prince Louis Napoleon was still beating the pavements of West-end London, and hatching the policy of the future—dreaming of a new Paris, in which he should be master, a Paris all beauty and luxury, vivid, glorious as the crystalline city of the Apocalypse. Who shall say how glorious were the dreams behind that inscrutable brow, which had faced failure and defeat, a father's stigma, the world's contempt, prison and exile, and which still pressed steadily forward to the goal?

The handsome lady who had been on board the ship sat among the flowers in the verandah, and fanned herself, and talked to the gentleman who smoked, just as she had done on the deck of the steamer. He was a stoutish man, very dark, with blue-black hair, and black almond-shaped eyes, and Sébastien hated him, without knowing why. The man was never absolutely unkind to the boy. He only ignored him. The woman was sometimes kind, sometimes cruel. She would play with the child, and caress him passionately in the morning, and fling him from her in the evening, in a burst of anger, for which he had given her no cause.

Lisette said Madame was a good soul, but was not always herself. Sébastien wondered what it was to be not oneself, and why this mother of his

changed so curiously—soft and fair, and gentle and caressing in the morning; red and angry, with eyes that flashed fire, at night.

She went out very often in her carriage with the dark gentleman; after midday it was more usual for her to be out of doors than at home. She went to races, to drive in the Bois, to dine at a fashionable restaurant, and almost every evening to the opera or theatre. Her toilet was a solemn business, which occupied her and Lisette for an hour and a half at a stretch, and then she came down stairs rustling in silk or satin, with an Indian shawl upon her shoulders, a plume of feathers in her bonnet. Everything about her was rich and beautiful. The sheen of satin, the glow of colour caught the child's eye, and fascinated him.

‘Mamma, how pretty you are!’ he cried one day; and then she caught him up in her arms and kissed him, and called him her little angel, and took him out to look at her horses, the beautiful golden bays, nodding their thoroughbred heads in glittering bright harness, champing their bits.

Sébastien had often patted the horses and admired the carriage, but he had never ridden in it, had never sat by his mother's side upon those brocaded cushions.

One day he asked her to take him with her, pleaded to her piteously, as little children plead for trifles—as if this one thing were a matter of life or death.

The dark man was standing by, and she turned to him with an entreating look—looked at him as a slave looks at her master.

‘May not I take him?’ she asked. ‘Why shouldn’t I?’

‘Why shouldn’t you? Because I did not buy that carriage for another man’s brat to sit in. Take that little howler indoors, Jean’ (to the servant), ‘and strangle him if he doesn’t hold his tongue. You ought to have left him in Bourbon with his darkeys, as I advised you. He would have done very well there, and he is in everybody’s way here.’

In everybody’s way. That was a hard saying, and although Sébastien was not quite seven years old when he heard it, the full meaning of the speech went home.

He never asked to go in his mother’s carriage after that unforgotten day. He never again went into the portico when she was going to her carriage; never loitered in front of the steps to pat the horses’ satin coats, to look into their full, brown eyes—brown under a violet film, large kind

eyes which he had loved to contemplate. He shrank away from that pompous equipage and the smart livery servants, as from an unholy thing. The men had a way of grinning, of muttering confidences to each other, which he hated. Lisette was the only person in the house whom he liked, and the time was fast coming when he should cease to trust even her.

It seemed to him that he had been living for summers and winters innumerable in that house in the Bois de Boulogne. The geraniums and verbenas and heliotropes and calceolarias, a mass of scarlet and purple and gold, being renewed again and again; the leaves falling and returning again; and yet he was not nine years old. Days so idle and empty, a life so monotonous, seemed endless. He was nearly nine years old, and he was only an idle little vagabond in fine clothes. He could hardly read, although Lisette pretended to teach him—and Lisette was supposed to be a superior person, quite above the average lady’s-maid. But in a house where the mistress lived only for dress and pleasure, and had, moreover, a certain failing which was only spoken of in whispers—that terrible failing of being sometimes just a little ‘out of herself’—it was not to be supposed that the maid would be orderly or

industrious. Lisette dressed like a woman of fashion in Madame Caradec's cast-off clothes, and her favourite occupation was to stroll in the Bois, or to roam the streets of Paris under the excuse of giving the boy an airing. Sébastien had many such airings, and grew to hate the streets of Paris, where Lisette indulged all the instincts of the true *flâneur*, looking into print-shops, jewellers, booksellers, milliners', looking on at street rows, listening to street music, reading the bills of the theatres.

The house in the Bois was the kind of house which agents always call a *bijou* house, and was much better worthy that qualification than many houses so called. It had been built by a famous opera-singer in the zenith of her career, and sold by her in her decline. It was a thing of beauty in the *genre* Louis Quatorze ; for people had not then discovered that your only true loveliness lies in the *genre* Louis Seize.

It was a small house, on two floors ; the rooms panelled in white and gold ; ceilings and doors painted with Cupids and rose garlands ; looking-glasses wherever they could be introduced ; gilding everywhere ; sofas and chairs and *portières* of Gobelins tapestry.

The rooms on the upper floor all opened out

of a spacious central landing, lighted from the top; the staircase descended in a circular sweep from this gallery, and every sound on the floor below travelled upward by this wide opening, and was distinctly heard upon that upper story where Sébastien slept in a little room next to Lisette’s bed-chamber.

Thus it happened that he was startled from his sleep one night by the sound of voices below—loud, angry, menacing; and then came a peal of bitter laughter, and then a woman’s shriek. He leapt from his little bed, and rushed to the gallery, and looked over the gilded balustrade. There was no one in the hall below, where the lamp shed a soft light tempered by ruby glass—a light that tinged the marble pavement and the white bearskin rug at the foot of the stairs with roseate gleams. The hall was empty, but those angry voices were still sounding in the drawing-room.

‘Why did I ever trust my life with such a brute? What could I see in you to like?’

‘You saw plenty of money; that is what you like!’

‘The meanness—to remind—obligations—in-sufferable vulgarity!’

The words came in gasps, like javelins hurled in the face of a foe.

‘ You are insatiable—a bottomless pit for money ! ’

‘ A gambler—a profligate ! ’

‘ You drink like a fish ! ’

‘ Drink—oh, execrable liar -- drink ! Not an hour, not a day, will I live under such insults. Here, and here, and here, take them back—every one ! Take your diamonds ! Do you suppose I value such dirt from a man capable—— ’

And then came a burst of hysterical sobbing, a muttered oath in the man’s bass voice, a door flung open below, a staggering, uncertain rush up the stairs, the swirl and rustle of a woman’s satin gown, a figure lurching against Sébastien as he clung to the balustrade, pushing past the poor little trembler, unconscious of that childish presence.

‘ Adieu ! ’ called the bass voice from below ; ‘ remember when *I* say adieu, it means for ever.’

There was no reply from above. The swaying, tottering figure had vanished through the open door of Madame’s bedchamber. Stifled sobs, angry mutterings sounded faintly from within ; but there was no reply to that voice below.

‘ Very well, then, it *is* adieu,’ said the voice, and then came the sound of footsteps crossing the hall. The heavy outer door was opened and slammed to again with a reverberation that sounded like the closing of a chapter in a life-history.

CHAPTER II.

‘HER FEET GO DOWN TO DEATH.’

WHEN that outer door shut with its sonorous clang, Sébastien had a feeling as of freedom and safety suddenly recovered. The dark man was gone. Those sinister eyes, which had so often contemplated him with a moody look, were on the outside of the house. While the man was inside, the boy had lived in ever-present dread of him and of that darkling look. He was gone now, and the manner of his departure meant that he was gone for ever.

Sébastien crept through the half-open door into his mother's bedroom, a little white figure in a nightgown. He crept across the thick Aubusson carpet, and squatted down on the edge of the estrade upon which his mother's bed stood—a regal bed, tall, splendid, draped with amber satin and heavy old Flanders lace.

How beautiful the room was in the soft light of the shaded lamp! Sébastien had never entered it till to-night. Among the mysteries and secrets

of that house this room had been the most mysterious. Sébastien had never dared to cross the threshold of that door. He had seen his mother emerge, radiant and beautiful, like a goddess from a temple ; but the temple was not for his feet to enter, and the boy—petted in one hour, thrust angrily aside in the next—had lost all the natural audacity of childhood.

But to-night his mother was in trouble, and he wanted to comfort her if he could. He clambered upon the bed, and put his arms round her, and kissed her wet cheek. She murmured some broken words, and then dropped into a heavy sleep, disturbed now and again by a groan or a little cry, as of pain. The boy slipped gently from her side, and sat on the estrade, with his head leaning against the bed, and looked wonderingly round the room.

Yes, it was very beautiful : a room modelled upon that old stately pattern of Versailles in the days of the great king ; a miniature reproduction of that room in which the mighty Louis lay dying, with Madame de Maintenon and all his courtiers watching the last flicker of that expiring light. Dressing-table, with scattered trinkets amidst a litter of ivory brushes, silver hand-mirror, cut-crystal bottles, fans, jewel-caskets, sachets : wardrobe with doors of marqueterie and ormolu,

one door half open and revealing the heaped-up satins and cashmeres on the shelves within. Everything was costly and more or less artistic, and the mistress of all this finery lay there like a log, sleeping off the fumes of wine.

The days that followed that night were the happiest days of Sébastien's childhood. His mother and Lisette went off to the sea next morning, carrying the boy with them. It was August, and divine weather. They stayed at Dieppe, at an hotel facing the sea, and sat upon the beach half the day, and drove about the country the other half, and dined together in a pretty little room with a balcony overlooking the sea, and after dinner Sébastien went to bed and slept soundly, steeped in fresh air and sunshine, and the bliss of fancying himself beloved by his mother; while Madame Caradec and Lisette went to the casino, where the lady gambled and the maid looked on.

These halcyon days lasted for about a fortnight, by the end of which time Madame Caradec had spent or lost all her money. She went back to Paris, expecting to find her lover subjugated by this hard treatment, unable to endure life without her, and ready to grovel at her feet for pardon. Instead of this state of things she found an

auctioneer's bill posted against the walls of her bijou villa. Minions of the law were in possession of the splendours that had been nominally hers. The door of the fairy palace in the wood was shut against her for evermore.

The blow was sharp, and went home. Still in the zenith of her charms, Madame Caradec had believed until this moment that her power over her slave was limitless. From the day of her arrival at Bourbon, beautiful, triumphant, happy in her escape from a husband she hated, and in her union with a lover she adored, Laurent Deschanel, the rich creole, had been her devoted admirer. He had followed her like her shadow, had endured all the arrows of an insolent tongue, and all the outrages which a proud and passionate woman, doubly sensitive on account of her false position, her blighted name, could heap upon the man who dared to assail her constancy, to try to tempt her from the lover for whom she had sacrificed home and country. She had laughed at his love, and the sordid temptations which he offered—a settlement—jewels—a position such as Lucien Rochefort could never give her.

Then came the bloody close of her brief day of bliss; and she was alone in a remote colony, without a friend, without a counsellor, outlawed

by her sin, and almost penniless. Laurent Deschanel seized his opportunity. A month after Lucien's death, when Madame Caradec had tasted the cup of bitterness and desolation, he came to her in a new character—he came as consoler, adviser, friend. He offered her his purse, just as she was beginning to feel the horror of being penniless in a strange land. She received him with scant civility, but she accepted the use of his purse; and six months afterwards she left the island, where her presence was a scandal, as Laurent Deschanel's mistress. The man adored her, but he was a creole, with all the creole vices. They led a life of sensuous ease, of frivolous pleasure, recognising no higher law than their own fancy, no higher aim than the enjoyment of the hour. Their life for the most part had been made up of quarrels and reconciliations, and many of those quarrels had been every whit as violent as that last dispute after which Monsieur Deschanel had cried ‘Good-bye, for ever.’ Coralie fancied this quarrel would end as the others had ended; and that Laurent would be all the more her slave because of that fortnight of severance. He would have discovered the emptiness of life without his idol.

Madame Caradec did not know that her slave had for some time past been somewhat weary of his

chains ; and that an idol who takes too much fine-champagne and chartreuse, and has fits of gloom and nervous crises of passionate despair in her cups, bemoaning the bitterness of Fate, and the loss of honour, is apt to pall upon her worshipper. She woke from a dream of despotic power to find herself an outcast, friendless in the streets of Paris, face to face with stern reality for the first time in her life. Mistress and maid put their heads together, and, after much driving to and fro in a hired carriage, they found lodgings in a somewhat tawdry hotel in the rue St.-Honoré. The rooms were expensive, the furniture was gaudy, and Sébastien saw his small figure, in a velvet tunic and lace collar, reflected at every angle in the tall looking-glasses which adorned the room. It seemed to him as if the chief furniture of the apartment consisted of looking-glasses and ormolu clocks. He heard the monotonous tick, tick, tick on every side, go where he would. The street was narrow, and the heavily-draped windows let in the gloom of a dull gray evening. Everything was different from the lovely little house in the wood yonder.

‘Mamma,’ cried Sébastien, hanging on his mother’s satin gown, ‘when are we going home again?’

‘Never!’ she answered angrily, with hoarse,

thickened accents which the boy knew too well—her evening voice. 'We have no home.'

After this came other changes. They seemed to be always removing to new lodgings. Lisette managed everything. Madame seldom left her room till late in the afternoon. At one time they occupied an apartment in the Champs-Élysées—pretty little rooms with low ceilings, an *entresol* looking into a small garden, where Sébastien could play, in his lonely, dreary fashion, very tired of solitude and confinement. On fine evenings he went out with Lisette, and saw the lamps and heard the music in a garden near, and played with strange children, while Lisette conversed with her numerous friends. His mother was seldom at home of an evening. He saw less of her now than even under the Deschanel dominion, severe as that *régime* had been.

Strange faces came and went across the shifting scenes of Sébastien's life at this period faces which never grew friendly or welcome to him. There was a stout elderly man, with a gray moustache, who seemed to have some kind of authority, and with whom Sébastien's mother had terrible quarrels, which recalled the scene in the villa. He disappeared when they left the Champs-Élysées: and now their lodgings got

shabbier and shabbier, until Sébastien, after having been awakened suddenly out of his sleep one night, huddled hastily in his clothes, and hurried off in a *fiacre*, awoke in the gray winter light to a wretched bare-looking little room with whitewashed walls. He had never seen such a room in his life before. It was like a cell in a prison. There was no furniture but a narrow iron bedstead and a rush-bottomed chair. He got up, and stood upon the chair to look out of the window, and he turned sick and cold at the sight of the yard below him. He was on a sixth story. Long rows of windows faced him on the other side of a quadrangle; shabby windows with every variety of blind or curtain—with clothes hanging out to dry—with all those signs of humble poverty which were new to Sébastien.

He took fright suddenly. Why had he been brought to such a place? Appalling stories of child stealers, wherewith Lisette had beguiled the weariness of long winter evenings, flashed across his mind. He had been stolen—last night when he was too sleepy to be quite sure who carried him downstairs and put him in the *fiacre*—and brought to this dreadful place, a prison for stolen children. He was going to rush out of the room in a panic, when he heard a familiar voice close by. It

was Lisette singing the last popular refrain, '*Faut pas fermer l'œil*,' in her Porte St.-Martin voice close by. Yes, Lisette was in the adjoining room, with which the door of his little cell, or closet, communicated. He rattled at the door, which was bolted, and Lisette opened it and admitted him to a bare-looking room with a few poor sticks of furniture, a chest of drawers with a cracked marble top, a tawdry gilt clock that had long left off going, a round table, and a wretched little bed in a corner. There was a smaller room within, for Madame Caradec, who must have her den in which to sleep half the day. There was a coffee-pot on a black iron stove, which projected into the room, and there were some preparations for breakfast, scanty enough, on the table. Everything had a barren, poverty-stricken look. Sébastien did not know that his mother and her confidential servant had lived on credit as long as tradesmen would trust them, and that this sudden plunge into abject poverty was the natural result of exhausted credit. To Sébastien the change appeared unnatural. But Sébastien was not a pampered child. He was not accustomed to have his comfort studied, his wishes gratified. He had been flung about like a ball all his little

life, put here or put there, caressed or thrust aside, as suited the convenience of his owners. And now he ate his breakfast of a roll without any butter, and a cup of coffee, without venturing to question Lisette about the sudden change in his surroundings.

As the time went on the boy grew accustomed to this squalid life. It was a long, long winter—joyless days, dismal nights, for his mother and Lisette were never at home of an evening. He spent those long evenings in utter solitude, locked in the bare cheerless room, listening to all the sounds of the huge uncleanly barrack in which he lived, sounds of brawling, strife, drunken fury, drunken mirth, cries of murder sometimes, and the crash of furniture thrown over, the dull thud of a cruel blow, children squalling, naked feet pattering along the brick-floored passage, vulgar voices singing vulgar songs, whistling, screaming, laughter, and now and then for variety a visit from the police.

So the boy passed his tenth birthday, steeped in ignorance—for Lisette had long ago abandoned her feeble attempts at tuition—and very weary of his first decade of existence.

His mother and her companion had found an occupation for their evenings at a theatre in this

wretched quarter, a theatre frequented by workmen and their womenkind, and where the entertainment was of the strongest order. Madame Caradec's beauty and Lisette's impudence were their only recommendations for the dramatic profession. Madame was engaged as a showy figure in a fairy spectacle. She had but to stand where she was put—a nymph draped in spangled gauze in a tinsel grotto. Lisette, the brighter and cleverer of the two, was entrusted with a speaking part, and sang her half dozen couplets, in the approved style, ‘with intention.’

Sébastien was not allowed to go to the theatre where his mother was engaged. It was to him a mystery, but he heard the two women talk of it as they sat late into the night drinking some yellow liquid, which looked like melted gold in their glasses, and which they spoke of laughingly by all kinds of strange names. Sébastien used to hear them talking late into the night, from the little iron bedstead in his cell. He had too little air and exercise in the long dreary day to sleep well at night.

Life went on after this fashion all through the winter. On Sundays Madame Caradec slept till evening, or else rose rather earlier than usual, and went out with Lisette, dressed in her best gown,

for a day's pleasure. Sébastien never knew where they went, or what their pleasures were, save from their disjointed talk after these revels about the dishes they had eaten and the wine they had drunk. His mother's best gown and bonnet had a slovenly air now. The satin was frayed, the sleeves were worn ragged at the edges. The Indian shawl had lost its beautiful colouring, and had been darned in ever so many places by Lisette, who now dressed as well as her mistress, with the cast-off finery that had been flung to her in days gone by. A good deal of this finery had gone to 'my aunt,' but enough was left to make the maid as much a lady as Madame.

Spring came. March winds—bitter, biting winds, which seemed to work their own will in the great bare barrack, with its endless corridors and its hundred rooms, carpetless boards, bricked passages, a house that was old before it had lost its air of raw newness, wordwork shrunk, panels of the doors split, staircase walls green with dirt and grease. Every one who rubbed against the wall seemed to leave the taint and smear of a sordid existence behind; everyone who mounted the stairs left the print of dirty boots.

There were no shutters, no curtains, no draperies to shut out the cold. The east wind shrieked

and whistled in the passages as in a mountain glen. Madame Caradec complained that a villainous cough, which had fixed its claws upon her at Christmas, would never be any better so long as she lived in that infected hole. She was very angry when Lisette suggested that the cough might go if she would leave off drinking brandy.

'Why do you drink it yourself if it is poison?' she asked.

'I only take a taste now and then, to keep you company,' answered Lisette, which was not true, although there is no doubt the maid was much more sober than the mistress.

The bleak March made Madame's cough much worse. It grew so bad that she was obliged to give up her engagement—her twenty francs a week—at the theatre, her Sundays feasting on the boulevard or in the suburbs.

Her cheeks were hollow, her eyes brilliant with hectic light. She was no fit occupant for a tinsel grotto, for Juno's peacock car, or the palace of the fairy queen. Lisette, who had developed some talent in the soubrette line, was now the only bread-winner, and her thirty francs a week did not go very far. Before that month of March was over everything that could be taken to my aunt had been so taken, even to Madame Caradec's

last satin gown and Indian shawl, and the large Leghorn bonnet, with its marabout plumage. She had only a *peignoir* left; but as she hardly ever rose from her bed now, this did not much matter.

She was sorely ill, and suffered a great deal. While Lisette was at the theatre, Sébastien used to sit by his mother's bed for hours, deeply sorry for her, full of silent pity. He gave her brandy when she asked for it, if there was any there to give. Who could refuse her the only thing that seemed to give her relief from that terrible oppression, that labour and pain in every breath she drew? The boy understood dimly, from Lisette's talk, that it was wrong to drink brandy; but he knew that sick people must have physic, and this yellow stuff, which shone and sparkled in the glass, seemed the only physic that was of any use to his mother. A doctor came in once or twice a week and looked at her, and went through certain formalities with a stethoscope, and took his fee of a couple of francs and went away again, without having been of any more use than the organ-grinder down in the street below, grinding the same airs from the '*Dame Blanche*' and the '*Domino Noir*' over and over again on certain days of the week.

One day, when the doctor had paid his visit, Lisette followed him into the corridor, and came back a few minutes afterwards with her wicked little Parisian face all blotted with tears—that audacious countenance which had so many grimaces for the blouses in the pit and gallery yonder. Sébastien asked her why she was crying, but she frowned at him and pointed to the bed for her only answer; and he knew that she was sorry for his mother, whose breathing was so painful, and whose hands and face scorched him when he caressed her. There were two red fever-spots on her hollow cheeks, and her eyes shone like glass.

Later in the evening, when Lisette had put on her cloak and bonnet to go to the theatre, Sébastien heard her talking with one of her gossips in the corridor.

‘She will die,’ said Lisette, ‘and who is to pay for her funeral? She was born a lady, poor thing. It would be hard if she were taken away upon the poor people’s common bier to be flung into their common grave.’

‘Is there no one?’ asked the neighbour.

‘There are three or four. I have written to them all. One answered—he who once thought gold too common for her—that she might starve or rob for aught he cared. Another sent me twenty louis,

at the beginning of her illness, but told me not to trouble him again. Another gave no answer. There is only the husband left. I think, perhaps, he would pay for the funeral, for the sake of being sure he had got rid of her.'

'Why don't you write to him?'

'She would be so angry,' murmured Lisette.

'How can that matter? She will be dead before he can answer your letter.'

The neighbour was right. Lisette wrote to Raymond Caradec, of Pen-Hoël, by the next day's post; and Coralie was dead before her husband came in person to answer her handmaid's letter.

She was lying on her shabby bed in the wretched lodging, two tall wax candles burning on the little table beside her pillow, and a little spray of box lying between them. They had folded her hands upon her breast, and laid a cheap little metal crucifix and a twenty sous rosary above them. All the taint and soil of her sins had vanished from the marble face. It was almost as beautiful as the day she came out of her convent school to plight her faith to Raymond Caradec. His youth came back to him, all the fervour and hope of that day, as he stood looking down at his dead wife in the chilly gray March afternoon, amidst the sordid surroundings of the workman's

quarter, bare walls, dirt, squalor. He, the proud bearer of a good old name, the dishonoured husband, knelt down and touched the marble hand with his lips. He had hated her while she lived: but pity melted the ice at his heart: the awfulness of death was stronger than anger or revenge.

He said a prayer, dipped his finger in the holy water beside the bed, crossed himself, and went back to the sitting-room, where Lisette and Sébastien stood waiting for him. The boy's pale face turned towards him wistfully, as if entreating for a father's kindness.

Caradec hardly glanced at his son. He took out his purse and unfolded three or four bank-notes, which he handed to Lisette.

‘There is money for the funeral. Let it be simple but decent,’ he said; ‘and let there be no name on the coffin or the headstone. Initials and a date will be enough. She will be buried at Montmartre of course?’

‘That is nearest,’ said Lisette.

‘And the nearest is best. Why loiter on the last stage of a journey?’ said Caradec, with a saturnine smile. ‘The boy will go back to Brittany with me.’

Sébastien put his arms round Lisette's neck. After all, she was the only friend he had ever

known since he parted from his sailor friends on the steamer—she had nursed him when he was sick, she had amused him when he was well: all he had ever known of motherly care was that which he had received from her.

‘May not she go with us?’ he asked.

‘No, child; there is nothing for Mademoiselle to do at Pen-Hoël; and such an accomplished young person would not like to be buried in a country château,’ answered the Count scoffingly.

He had a carriage at the door. Lisette put Sébastien’s poor little wardrobe into a small valise, and the three went downstairs together, the workmen whom they met on the stairs, the women and children at their open doors—all staring at the tall dark gentleman, who had such a grand look, and who was leading the shabby, out-at-elbows little lad down the dirty stair by the collar of his threadbare jacket. Everybody wanted to know what it all meant. Lisette had ample entertainment offered her by her gossips when she went upstairs again. A ‘*goutte*’ here, and another ‘*goutte*’ there, would she but only talk her fill, and tell all that could be told about the handsome corpse lying in the candle-lit room yonder, and the handsome gentleman who had just gone downstairs.

CHAPTER III.

‘CRUEL AS THE GRAVE.’

MONSIEUR CARADEC and his son left the rue Jean-Jacques Rousseau that evening by the Malle Poste for Brest, quite the rapidest way of travelling in those days. They sat side by side in the *coupé*, with one other traveller, and travelled all that night and all the next day. It was in the twilight of a cold spring evening that Sébastien saw the towers and pinnacles of Mont St.-Michel stand darkly out against the yellow sunset sky, and the gray sea deepening to purple towards the distant horizon. The whole of the journey had been full of interest to him. His young limbs had been cold and cramped half the time; but his young eyes had devoured the landscape, his young soul had drunk deep of delight. The trees and fields, the hills and valleys, the winding streams and dark mysterious woods—all these were new to the young captive of the city, who had longed with a passionate longing for escape from the blank and drear

monotony of stone walls, dirt, and squalor. That house in the faubourg Montmartre had hung upon him like a nightmare, had crushed his young spirit, dulled his young blood. What ineffable rapture, then, to be borne swiftly along these dewy country roads, to see the river shining under the stars, to watch the moon rushing among the clouds—he never suspected it was the clouds that went so fast, and not the moon—to hear the kine lowing in their willowy pastures—the village cock crowing as the mail-cart drove past farms and cottages in the sunrise! What a delight to descend at the village inn for a hasty snatch of food, a cup of coffee, a crust of bread and butter, and then up again and away!—the post-cart stops for neither king nor kaiser—and so, and so, till in the deepening dusk they alighted at the bottom of the hill crowned by the turrets and gable ends of Pen-Hoël.

After this came a life of solitude and abandonment almost as complete as that of the fairy palace in the wood near Passy. The Count had taken his boy back to the château because it was the easiest way of disposing of him, not for any love that he bore to Sébastien. What love could he feel for a boy who seemed to him the incarnation of past wrongs? His own son, yes; but it was of Coralie he thought when he looked at the boy,

albeit Sébastien was a true Caradec—dark-eyed, tall, broad-shouldered, with marked features, and a proud carriage of the head.

Raymond let his son run wild, saw as little of him as possible, and thought he had done his duty to the boy in the way of education when he had engaged the services of the village priest—a benevolent old man, born in the peasant class, and no marvel of erudition — as Sébastien's tutor. Father Bressant was horrified when he found that at eleven years of age Sébastien could neither read nor write, and the first year of his tuition was devoted to these elements of all learning, and the Church catechism. In the second year the curé taught his pupil a little Latin, and the history of France as made and provided by the historians of Port-Royal. The hours given to study were of the shortest, for Sébastien chafed against the confinement within four walls. His wild, free life satisfied all the longings of his nature. He rode, he fished, he shot and hunted with the instinct of a born sportsman. He had hardly a friend of his own class, but he made friends for himself of gamekeepers and peasants, of poachers and fishermen, of smugglers and coastguardsmen. He spent many a night far afield under the stars, engaged in some kind of sport, and crept into the house at day-

break before any of the servants were astir. The wanderers of the countryside, the *pillawer* with his little cart of foul rags, the peddler with his pack, the colporteur with his case of books—he conversed with all these, and was at home with them at once. He talked with them of that great city which they visited now and again, full of wonder and respect for its splendours, and which he knew and loathed.

By the time he had been two years at Pen-Hoël he loved the place and its surroundings with an intense love. There was not a bank or a coppice, a willow or a waterpool, a clump of Spanish chestnuts or an old wall feathered over with fern-fronds, which Sébastien did not know by heart. The gardeners and farm labourers, the grooms and gamekeepers, and all the villagers around loved him. He was as a king among them. If there had been need of a new Vendée, Sébastien Caradec could have raised a regiment. All the countryside would have flocked to the sound of his drum. Everybody loved the bold, frank, handsome, open-handed boy, except his father. Raymond Caradec could not forgive his son for the traitorous blood in his veins, for his involuntary share in the past. He had been his mother's companion in her vicious career—in her

dégringolade. He had drunk of the cup of her pleasures, perhaps basked in the luxury of sin. The Count had never dared to question his son as to that past history. There were hideous pages in the boy's life which he shrank from opening. But sometimes, on those rare occasions when the father and son were alone together, Raymond Caradec would fall into a reverie, seeing with his mind's eye that past life, with all its loathsome details—feasting, revelry, fine clothes, a thick hot mist of wine-fumes and lamp-light, clouding the atmosphere of a gaudily furnished saloon. Friends had told him something of his wife's existence in Paris—the money she had squandered, the train she had led. He asked no questions; he winced at the sound of his wife's name. But there are people who will put their finger-tips upon gaping wounds, by way of friendship; and Raymond Caradec knew what manner of life the dead woman had lived. He associated his innocent son with all that horror and shame. What blessing could he hope from a boy reared in such iniquity? Yet there were times when the boy's frank outlook and noble face impressed him in spite of himself, and he was almost kind to his son. Unhappily these intervals of fatherly feeling were of the rarest.

When Sébastien had been about a year and a half at Pen-Hoël, and had become, as it were, a living part of the hills and woods, forgetful of all the life he had known before he came there, the Count went to Paris with an old college friend who had dropped upon Pen-Hoël unexpectedly—from the stars as it were—one autumn night, and who, after staying three days at the château, tempted Monsieur Caradec to accompany him to the great city, where he had a wife and an apartment in the rue Saint Guillaume. It was late in October, the hops were picked, the apples were garnered, the sarrasin fields were brown and bare, autumn winds shrieked and howled round the old house as if they would have blown down its quaint old turrets, the brazen weathercock groaned and scrooped in its iron socket, the solid old casements rattled and shook—a dreary season for the master of Pen-Hoël, who had long ceased to care for sport. Everybody would be coming back to Paris after the season of *villegiatura*. The theatres were opening. The town would be at its best. Raymond Caradec, who felt himself becoming prematurely old, a creature sunk in gloom and hopelessness, accepted the invitation, but with reserve.

‘You and your wife will find me sorry company,’ he said. ‘I have let myself rust too long.’

'Never too late to rub the rust off,' answered Monsieur Lanion, his friend. 'My wife is a very good little person, and will do her utmost to enliven you.'

Thus urged, Raymond risked the experiment. He felt a little *dépaysé* for the first day or so, amid the *bourgeois* comfort and home-like air of the apartment in the rue Saint-Guillaume. He had never known what it was to have a home since his mother's death, and these handsome old rooms, in which the substantial Empire furniture was brightened by the graceful additions of womanly taste—lamps, flowers, books, piano, harp—had the air of a newly discovered country, a hitherto unimagined paradise. The piano was Madame Lanion's particular function; the harp belonged to her sister, a delicate, fair-haired girl of twenty, who had been left an orphan within the last three years, and had lived with her sister since her bereavement. The sisters were both musical. They sang, and played duets for harp and piano.

Adèle de Guirandat was not a beautiful woman. She did not impress the stranger with her charms at a glance, or lead him captive with a smile and a word. She had a fragile elegance which pleased his fastidious tastes. She was reserved, without shyness, and after a little while, when he became

interested in her, she seemed to him the fair embodiment of feminine purity. Her manners, her movements, her dress were all distinguished by that gracefulness which is the highest charm in a woman. Caradec did not ask himself whether she was good-tempered, warm-hearted, frank, brave—of those grander qualities which make the nobility of woman's character he thought but little before this quiet perfection, these outward graces of a young lady educated in a convent, polished and refined in the society of all that was most intellectual in Paris. Monsieur Lanion occupied an official post of some importance, was a man of some culture, and knew all the best people in both parties—Legitimist and Orleanist. Politics were tolerably smooth in Paris just now. The people were satisfied with their Citizen King, although they made their little jokes about him, his pear-shaped countenance, his trick of bidding for cheap popularity, his little affectations of *bourgeoisie*, and that strain of avarice which is, after all, the universal fellow-feeling that makes the whole world kin.

Possibly, when Monsieur Lanion urged his old friend to take up his abode in the rue Saint-Guil-laume for a while, he may have had some dim notion of the thing which had come to pass. He

may have told himself that the proprietor of Pen-Hoël, with his fine old château and an income which, although modest, was all-sufficient for the comfort and conventionalities of life in Brittany, would be no unworthy alliance for his sister-in-law. Adèle had been three years in Paris. She had been generally admired, but she had attracted no eligible suitor; and Lanion, who adored his wife, was beginning to be a little weary of this domicile *à trois*. He wanted to have the family hearth for himself and his Laure. They had no children, and were all in all to each other. Adèle was very sweet, but she was an incubus.

So when he saw Caradec interested, charmed, growing daily fonder, he did his uttermost to fan the flame. Yes, Adèle was quite the most amiable girl he had ever met with. She had all the perfections of Laure, with additional graces which were quite her own. There were not half a dozen young women in Paris who could play the harp as well as she did. A difficult, ungrateful instrument. And then, how she sang! *Mon Dieu*, what finish, what expression! Garcia had given her lessons after she came to Paris, and had almost wept at the thought that such a voice should be wasted in drawing-rooms, half appreciated by senseless people who knew nothing about music.

Caradec agreed with every word of this praise. He had listened with rapture to the harp, which brought the white arms and slender waist of the player into such prominence. The voice in which she sang a ballad of Hugo's or of Musset's—a little thing in Italian by he knew not whom—was sweetness itself. But was it possible that such an accomplished young lady would endure the monotony of a château on the edge of Brittany, would receive the addresses of a widower, a man grown old before his time, broken down by the burden of past sorrows, of intolerable memories?

'My dear fellow, I admit you were rather dismal when you first came among us,' answered Lanion, laughing at his friend's gravity; 'but you are improving daily. Stay a week or two longer, and you will be as young as the youngest of us.'

Caradec sighed and shook his head. But he yielded to his friend's urgency, and stayed in the rue Saint-Guillaume. There was plenty of room for him in that spacious second floor *entre cour et jardin*. His host and hostess made much of him. They took him to the Opera House, where 'Robert the Devil' was still a novelty. They took him to see Rachel, then in her zenith. She had just revealed the depth and grandeur of her powers in Phèdre, that one character which all

the critics had vowed she would never be able to play. It was a less brilliant Paris than the glittering city of the Empire; but it was a very delightful city, nevertheless, and Caradec lingered there as amid scenes of enchantment.

One evening he took courage, and offered himself to Adèle. It was Madame Lanion's Tuesday, when all the nicest officials and a few of the choicest people in the world of art and literature came to drink weak tea, served at ten o'clock, and nibble sweet cakes, in the rue Saint-Guillaume. Adèle had performed upon her harp, had sung three of her little songs—her whole *répertoire* consisted of about six—and now they two were alone in the smaller salon, which was half a library, while the company were gathered round the wood fire in the larger room, talking politics. That inner room was dimly lighted by a pair of wax candles on the velvet-draped mantelpiece, and in that half-obscurity Raymond took heart of grace, and drew a little nearer to Adèle as she stood in one of her graceful attitudes, her elbow resting on the low mantelpiece, the beautiful arm shining like alabaster under the large gauze sleeve, the slender figure exquisitely set off by the broad waistband and buckle which girdled her white satin gown.

He asked her in all humility if she could marry a man with whom the freshness of youth was past; if she could be content with life in a solitary country house.

‘We are not quite in a desert,’ he said apologetically; ‘we have neighbours at Avranches, which is not ten miles off—rather an important town.’

She looked down, blushing a little, listening with an amused smile to his faltered apologies. She was no more in love with him than with yonder statuette of the Belvidere Apollo; but she was tired of making a third in her sister’s household and she had an inkling that her brother-in-law was getting tired of her. That sort of thing ought to finish, and there had been no one else to offer a speedy *dénouement*.

‘You would bring your wife to Paris at least once a year, I hope, monsieur,’ she said, ‘smiling,’ with lowered eyelids.

He caught her hand in his, and kissed it passionately.

‘That means yes,’ he said.

French people have no idea of long engagements. They despatch the doomed with an alarming promptitude. The Comte de Pen-Hoël left Paris next day to regulate his affairs in

Brittany, returned to the metropolis in three weeks to sign the marriage contract, and to be married at the church of St. Sulpice, with all befitting solemnity. His wife's harp was packed and ready, with her trousseau, and the corbeille containing the usual cashmere shawl, a set of amethysts and diamonds which had belonged to Caradec's mother, and some more modern jewels newly purchased, notably a gold bandeau for the hair, set with emeralds, such as they had seen Rachel wear in *Zaire*, below her gauze turban.

Raymond Caradec was a proud man the day he carried his young wife home to the old château—proud of having won a pure and perfect creature to be his companion, a being beside whose purity the sins of the dead woman lying in the cemetery at Montmartre were dark as the crimes of the Princess Dahut, guilty daughter of the good king Gradlan, the Arthur of Brittany.

They posted all the way from Paris to Pen-Hoël, and the journey was slow and costly. The fair young bride had a weary look when the carriage crossed the little bridge under the Norman portcullis which still guarded the château. Wintry mists veiled the country side. All was grey and chill, save for the faint yellow light of a December sunset, with a gleam of red here and there upon the steel-

gray river. Adèle shuddered. She had never been further from Paris than Fontainebleau in her life before: and Fontainebleau was Paris in miniature as compared with the villages through which she had passed on this long dismal day—queer old stone cottages, ancient crones spinning in doorways and windows, like the wicked fairies in old story-books, peasant boys riding on cows, magpies, priests, a girl astride a donkey between a pair of heavily-laden panniers. Was she to live the greater part of her life among such barbarians? Already she had begun to speculate whether it would be possible to persuade her husband to sell Pen-Hoël and take an apartment in the rue St. Guillaume or the rue de Lille. Paris—her beautiful Paris—with its theatres and churches, its music and splendour! It was but two days since she had left that lovely city, and she was pining to go back already.

Caradec had been observant of her all day, and had seen that she was neither pleased nor interested in anything she saw. They had breakfasted at Coutances, and spent an hour in the cathedral. They had stood on a height to see the Channel Islands yonder—Hern and Sark and Alderney—grey in a grey sea. They had stopped at Granville—another old church on a height, solitary

sands, a shabby town ; but the drive from Granville to Avranches, the ascent to the town on the hill, was lovely. Yet Adèle had admired nothing.

'I am afraid you are very tired,' said her husband.

'I have one of my bad headaches,' she answered languidly ; and he learnt for the first time that she was subject to a chronic headache.

From this time forward the headache was established as a domestic institution. When Madame Caradec had her headache no one was to say anything to her, or expect anything from her. She was to look as miserable or as ill-tempered as she pleased. Nobody was to complain. It was only madame's headache.

'I should have liked you to be well enough to enjoy the approach to Avranches,' said Caradec ; 'it is such a picturesque drive.'

And now they were in the little park of Pen-Hoël. The carriage wound slowly up the hill, and there was the château in front of them. There had been a castle in the days of Charles of Blois—a feudal castle—in that fine position ; and there were old walls and an old tower interwoven with the existing building, which dated from the time of Henry the Fourth. Adèle gave a piteous look when she saw the low ceilings and thick walls,

the deeply sunk windows and stone mullions. She detested an old house. Her only complaint against the Faubourg St.-Germain had been that it was not built yesterday.

But the old house with its dingy colouring, and ponderous worm-eaten furniture of carved oak or walnut, was not the worst thing at Pen-Hoël. The appearance of that tall handsome lad who came forward shyly to greet his father and his father's bride was a much greater trial for Madame Caradec's somewhat difficult temper. She knew that there was a child of the former marriage; but she had pictured to herself a little fellow in the nursery, a baby that could give her no trouble. This tall, broad-shouldered, dark-eyed boy was a personage.

'Mon Dieu,' she muttered to herself, 'am I always to live in a trinity?'

She gave Sébastien the tips of her gloved fingers, and he looked at her, with dark eyes full of doubt. The idea of his father's second marriage had been distasteful to him in the abstract: it was more than ever obnoxious now that he saw the lady.

'You can go to your usual amusements,' said Caradec, when he had shaken hands with his son, who had been waiting in front of the château for

the last two hours to give his father a respectful greeting, inspired to this politeness by the good old priest his tutor.

The boy perfectly understood the permission. He was not wanted in the newly organised home, any more than he had been wanted in the old one. He went off to his companion, the gamekeeper, and planned the next day's sport. He had his supper in the kitchen that night, feeling too shy to enter the rooms occupied by the new mistress of Pen-Hoël. The kitchen was a mighty stone hall, with a fireplace as big as a room ; gamekeepers, gardeners, and farm-servants had their meals there, and Sébastien was like a king among them. At his bidding the old men told their stories of gnomes and fairies, and crooned their old ballads, thirty or forty verses long, about the heroes and scourges of Brittany. The fare was of the roughest—hard cheese, harder cider, black bread ; but the meals were gayer than in the stately old room yonder, with its dark oak panelling and carved furniture, its vessels of shining brass and silver, its old Rouen pottery.

Little by little it grew to be an accepted fact that Sébastien should take his meals with the servants. 'He liked it better,' his stepmother declared, when the old curé complained of this

lapse into ignoble habits. He lived the best part of his life out of doors, and came home at all hours, his clothes bespattered, his boots coated an inch thick with mud. He was never in a condition to appear in the drawing-room or dining-room. 'And he has no more manners than one of those horrible cows which I am always meeting in your detestably muddy lanes,' said Adèle.

The curé sighed, and shrugged his shoulders. He had no faith in a woman who could let her husband's only son eat with the servants, and who did not love the cows and the deep rustic lanes of that romantic land. He took an early occasion to remonstrate with the father. 'But here he met sterner treatment. The count looked black as thunder at the mention of his son's name.

'The boy is a born vagabond, a young savage, whom even my wife has failed in taming,' he said harshly. 'Let him go his own way.'

'Do you think Madame la Comtesse understands the boy, or has really tried to tame him?' asked the priest. 'I find him gentle enough.'

Monsieur Caradec smiled with his haughty, self-complacent air. The curé was too near the peasant class himself to be over-critical in matters of refinement.

'My dear Father Bressant, if you like the boy,

so much the better,' he answered. 'Let him have his own way, and live among the people he likes. I suppose he will be a soldier in a year or two, and the discipline of a barrack will take off his rough edges.'

This speech, faithfully interpreted, meant that Count Caradec cared very little what became of his eldest son, so that he and his fragile wife were not plagued about him.

While Count Caradec's eldest son was growing up in solitude and neglect, came the historic year of forty-eight. Behold, the good Citizen King and that saintly woman his Queen were cast out of their palace by the broad bright river, like a guilty Adam and Eve out of Paradise, and were fugitives on the face of the earth, flying as for their lives. King and Queen in hiding for eight days in a little pavilion yonder by Havre de Grace, waiting what time winds are unruly and captains doubtful, for the opportunity of getting across to quiet England. Fair young princess and her children hastening to Avranches, with a view to sailing for Jersey. Duke de Nemours flying by Boulogne, and crossing—at peril of his life, in the teeth of a terrible gale—by the very steamer which has just brought over Cæsar and

his fortunes, in the form of Prince Louis Bonaparte, this time without the tame eagle.

Then followed a year of doubt and indecision, gloomy time for France, and gloomiest for Paris, where all along the Boulevards there was scarcely a balcony without its placard of apartments to let ; where every one was dubious, not knowing what might happen next. Sheep without a shepherd.

With November came the election of the President, and Prince Louis Bonaparte was proclaimed the chosen of the French people by five million votes ; his most powerful rival, General Cavaignac, only scoring a million and a half.

It was the country and not the town which made Louis Napoleon master of France. And the magic of his name was the spell which brought the rural population marching to the sound of the drum—the mayor, and the parish priest at their head—to cast their lot into the urn for the nephew of the Great Emperor. Horace Vernet and Béranger were the advocates who pleaded his cause with these simple hearts. There was scarcely a cottage in France that had not its cheap engraving of the ‘ Farewell at Fontainebleau ’ ; scarcely a cottage fire by which had not been recited those pathetic verses wherein the grandmother tells her grandchildren the story of the great Emperor

and his battles. Even in Brittany, the sacred memories of La Vendée were as nothing compared with the magical name of him who made France famous among the nations. Her little corporal, her invincible captain, her chosen and beloved of the long vanished years, when those who were old and dull to-day were young and glad.

In the little village of Pen-Hoël, all the peasants went gaily to vote for the nephew of their hero; while Raymond Caradec came to the voting-place, with grave and solemn countenance, to cast in his solitary vote for Henri de Bourbon.

And thus Louis Bonaparte became master and ruler of France, in the teeth of the National Assembly, which had done its best to discredit his claims; and in the chill December twilight of that year of forty-nine, the lamps upon the tribune newly lighted and burning dimly, a man of middle height suddenly emerged from the crowd of senators, and advanced to the tribune—pale, with marked features, heavy moustache, and the shadowy eyes of the fatalist and dreamer—to take the oath of fidelity to the Republic.

How sacred he deemed that oath, and how loyally he kept it was to be seen later.

Adèle had been married five years, and had borne her husband two sons; and she had been

more or less an invalid during the whole period of her wedded life. There was nothing specific the matter with her. She had consulted learned physicians at Rennes and Paris. She had the frequent attendance of a family doctor from Avranches. Her malady was nameless. The faculty proclaimed her organically sound, heart excellent, lungs all that could be desired, liver concientious in the performance of all its functions. Her only complaint was to fancy herself always ill. ‘*Madame s’écoute trop,*’ the Avranches doctor said. She was perpetually feeling throbbings and flutterings, sinkings and tremblings. Finding herself sole mistress of a fine old château in a solitary land, with twice too many servants, and a devoted husband, the elegant Adèle had taken to hypochondria as the only amusement possible in such a situation. She wore expensive morning gowns, and lolled on a sofa all day. She trained her husband to wait upon her, to fly for her smelling-bottle, to spend a considerable portion of his life in carrying fans and footstools, down-pillows for the aching head, medicine bottles and glass measures. She was Virtue’s self, a wife without a flaw; but she was not the pleasantest partner a man could have had. She was never out of temper, but she was often so ill that she must not be

spoken to; her nerves were sometimes so highly strung that a step upon the parquettèd floor caused her exquisite agonies. It was not to be supposed that such a sensitive creature could endure the presence of a hulking stepson, smelling of badgers and other noisome beasts.

To hear Adèle discourse to her chosen friends upon the pains and perils of maternity made it seem a miracle that the world had ever been peopled.

'But then I am such a fragile creature,' she added deprecatingly; 'you might blow me away with a breath.'

She was much too fragile to nurse her boys, or to perform any of those little services for them which are the delight of ordinary mothers. Mme. Lanion sent her a nurse who had nursed the infant of a duchess. No rough peasant woman of the district must be allowed to be foster-mother to Adèle's offspring, lest they should grow up as coarse and common as their half-brother. The Parisian nurse was a fine lady, and gave herself intolerable airs in the Pen-Hoël kitchen, and talked of the Faubourg—meaning St.-Germain—as if there were no other quarter in Paris. Raymond Caradec saw all the arrangements of his home altered, his expenses nearly doubled by the more elegant

manner of life which his wife insisted upon ; but he made no complaint. He worshipped Adèle for those qualities which made her unlike the woman who had betrayed him. He accepted his life as she chose to make it, indulged her morbid, selfish fancies, idolised the children she had brought him, and was in all things admirable, except in his neglect of Sébastien.

The time had come when his son felt that neglect in all its bitterness. The wild, free life, the woods, the sands and rocks and sea, the peasantry, the priests, the custom-house officers, had lost none of their delight. He had no wish to be the pampered inmate of a drawing-room, to sit by a wood-fire reading a novel, or to listen to Madame Caradec's rare performances upon the harp. He wanted none of the indulgences or luxuries of a rich man's son. But he yearned passionately for a father's love. He wanted his rightful place at his father's side. He asked himself bitterly what sin he had committed to justify a father's contempt.

He had the pride of his race, the offended pride of one who has done no wrong, and who feels the sting of injustice. He could not fawn or flatter. He waited, with a kind of dogged patience, for the day when his father should awaken to the knowledge of the wrong he had done his son,

and of his own accord should seek to make atonement.

While he was waiting in this spirit, half patient, half sullen, a catastrophe occurred which shipwrecked all his hopes, and made the breach between father and son impassable.

The four-year-old boy and his three-year-old brother adored Sebastien. It was a horrible fact, the cruellest turn which fate could have played Madame Caradec; but this evil thing had come to pass. Her sons were ever so much fonder of their step-brother than of her. Vain that she clad them in velvet and lace, and set them to play with ivory letters on the Aubusson carpet. They scampered off to the stables at the first opportunity, played havoc with velvet frocks and lace frills, and came back smelling of badger. Vain that she forbade donkeys and ponies as dangerous, denounced ladders and haylofts as ungentlemanlike. They rode bare-backed at three years old, and were always climbing ladders when they were not climbing trees. The invalid mother seldom left her bedroom till noon, and rarely left her sofa in the drawing-room except to go back to her bed-chamber at night. The Parisian dry-nurse, who had succeeded to Parisian wet-nurses, was much too fine and much too lazy to run after her

charges ; so the boys did as they liked, and their liking was to be with Sébastien, who returned their love in liberal measure. He made them fishing-rods, being marvellously expert in all mechanical arts, and they went on long expeditions with him, and came back with laden baskets, which they fondly believed they had helped to fill. They were his companions in all his occupations, loved to stand at his knees when he was at work at any of those constructions in the way of dovecotes, rabbit-hutches, tumbrils, bird-traps, for which, in the opinion of the peasantry, he had a heaven-given genius. He built a windmill for one cottager, who had been saving up the necessary timber for many years, and who had grown too old and feeble for that great work in the meanwhile. Sébastien's windmill was one of the marvels of the village. His popularity was doubled by the achievement, and Raymond Caradec heard his eldest son's praises from every villager with whom he condescended to converse. But these were not many, as the lord of the soil held himself mostly aloof from his serfs.

Madame Caradec gave way to much feeble and fretful lamentation upon the half-brother's evil influence upon her sons. They would grow

rude and rough like Sébastien—mere village boors, like their brother.

'You see so little of Sébastien that you can hardly know whether he is rude or courteous,' answered Caradec, stung by these peevish complaints.

At the cruel answer Adèle melted into tears, and sank back almost fainting among her down pillows. She was not made to endure unkindness from one she loved; she might be as cruel as she chose to other people, but breathe one harsh word, and she drooped and languished like a delicate flower bending before hurtling winds; and Raymond Caradec, being stern truthfulness himself, was the perpetual victim of these small hypocrisies, and always ready to apologise for a rough word. His weak, selfish wife had boundless power over him. In vain did he argue with himself that his eldest son was not altogether fairly treated, that there were faults on both sides; a few tears, a little plaintive look from the fair young wife quashed all his objections.

'You are not always here—you do not see'—she murmured significantly; and on the strength of such vague hints Raymond grew to believe that his son was brutal to the invalid stepmother whenever he, the master, was out of the way.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FURNACE FOR GOLD.

THUS it came about that although the little brothers thrived and grew rosy in their companionship with the tall, dark lad, Raymond Caradec was willing to admit that Sébastien's society was dangerous to the children; and when one autumn afternoon towards dusk he found his wife in tears on account of the prolonged absence of her babies, he was quite ready to be angry with his eldest son as the cause of those tears.

'Sébastien took them out directly after breakfast, although Marie told him the morning was too cold for them,' whimpered Adèle.

'Cold! Why, my child, the weather is lovely.'

'I only know that I have been shivering all the afternoon,' answered his wife, leaning out of her easy chair to spread her thin white hands above the wood fire. 'But cold or not, Sébastien has kept those dear children out all day, and no

one knows where he has taken them or what he has done with them.'

Here she broke down altogether, and sobbed hysterically, as if it were as likely as not that Sébastien had gone far afield on purpose to lose the little ones in a wood, like the wicked uncle in the story. It was the season of fallen leaves and robin-redbreasts.

'My cherished one, pray don't distress yourself!' implored Caradec, bending over his wife's chair. 'I have no doubt the boys are amusing themselves in the village, or in some orchard within half a mile.'

'They are not to be found within miles. I have sent all about the country in search of them—men on horseback. It seems that Sébastien harnessed the two donkeys to the little cart, and took a basket of provisions from the kitchen, and a bottle of wine, and cloaks and things, just as if he were running away with my darlings. Never, never, never to see their mother's face again.' More sobs, with increasing symptoms of hysteria: and hysteria with Madame Caradec was an awful thing—a thing to be dreaded by all about her.

'He has taken the boys for a picnic, of course,' said Caradec, when he had soothed his wife into brief tranquillity. 'It is not the first time he has taken the cart.'

‘A picnic in such weather—nearly the end of October!’ gasped Adèle; ‘and they tell me he took wood and matches, as if to light a fire. He is the very spirit of mischief.’

More followed to the same tune in the deepening dusk. Matters grew worse when the lamps were lighted; and as the night grew late Raymond himself became seriously alarmed. Scouts were sent in every direction; but it was not till the late autumn dawn that the sleepless household were in anywise enlightened as to the fate of the three boys. At that bleak hour one of the mounted gamekeepers came back with the news that the little donkey-cart had been seen crossing the sands to Mont St.-Michel early in the afternoon of the previous day. The boys had doubtless slept at the little inn within the fortress walls. The tide was full when the gamekeeper received this information, and, instead of crossing to the rock in a boat to follow up the trail, he deemed it his duty to return and tell his master what he had heard.

Madame Caradec had been hysterical all night. Nurse and lady’s-maid had had their hands full in attending upon her; but she grew worse on hearing that the cart had been seen on those perilous sands. Her darlings had been swallowed

alive in a quicksand. It was a hideous vengeance of Sébastien's. He was jealous of her children. He hated her. He was just the kind of boy to commit murder and suicide. He had it all in his face.

Raymond Caradec ordered his horse and rode off to the Mount, galloping across the low level fields beyond Pontorson, past the waggons laden with sand from the spongy shores of the Couësnon, and picking his way over the sandy flats, out of which the rock rose like an Egyptian pyramid. There was no causeway between solid earth and the Mount in those days. The citadel stood solitary, aloof, girt by blue waves or shining sand. At this time in the morning the tide was going out, and Raymond's keen glance explored the sandy flat, from which the waves were slowly crawling, in search of the little donkey-cart with the three boys. If they had been prisoners at the Mount last night, overtaken by the tide, they ought to be on their way home now.

There was no sign of the cart on the sands, but Monsieur Caradec found it in the inn yard, and the donkeys in the inn stables. The boys had arrived there at two o'clock yesterday, had explored the monastery and little town, and had picnicked on the sands. They had been seen

making their wood fire and boiling their coffee while the tide was still far out, and this was the last anybody had heard or seen of them. And now it was time for Raymond Caradec's heart to sink and grow cold with an awful fear. Of all places on this earth that he knew, there was no spot more dangerous to the rash or inexperienced rover than this sandy waste around St. Michel. Not a year passed but the sea had its victim in some imprudent traveller; and now his little children, the fair-haired babies he loved, had been devoured by that murderous sea. Of the eldest one he thought with only anger—bitter rage against the boy whose crime or whose folly had sacrificed the children he loved.

He talked to a dozen natives of the rock, who all told him the same story. The boys had been seen in the street, on the ramparts, and at the inn; but after four o'clock, when they picnicked on the sands, no mortal eye among the dwellers at Mont St. Michel had beheld them. They were to come back for the donkey-cart; but cart and donkeys were there to show that the tall youth and his little brothers had not returned. The natives shrugged their shoulders, and evidently apprehended the worst. It was a sad story. The lad was so good to his little brothers. He carried

the youngest on his shoulder across the sands, a rosy-cheeked cherub, with golden curls flying in the wind. Those terrible *lises*! It was not the first time.

Raymond Caradec turned from them with a face white as death. He guided his horse out of the inn yard and through the citadel gate mechanically. Whither was he to go next, or what was he to do? He knew not; but with a vague notion of doing something, he rode slowly on to the sands, as if to seek the particular spot which had engulfed his children. He knew not if they had been swallowed by one of those quicksands—the *lises*, as the natives called them, which abound on this level waste—or overtaken by the rising tide.

A barefooted peasant, a man who earned his living in the summer time as a guide to travellers, and starved and idled in the winter, ran after the horseman.

‘Sir,’ he said, ‘there is Tombelaine. The lad and his brothers might have gone there.’

‘Not likely; but there is just a chance.’

Tombelaine is the twin islet which rises a little way from the Mount—a barren rock—the resort only of fishermen and the rare smugglers who attempt the perils of this most unpropitious shore. Tombelaine? Yes, the rock rose yonder, to the

right, its base still washed by the tide. Raymond spurred his horse to a gallop, with his face towards that barren isle. The man rushed after him, shouting to him at the top of his voice to beware of the *lises*, to take the sand where it was hard and wrinkled, to avoid the soft ground, at peril of his life. The count neither heard nor heeded, but galloped on towards the rock. Providence was kind to him, as to drunken men in their peril. The waves washed against his stout charger's breast as he stood close beside the rock. Thank God! His call was answered by his eldest boy's deep baritone, and by two little piping voices that sounded like the treble cry of the seagulls.

They were alive. They stood shivering on the rock, waiting for the tide to go down. They were very cold, those two little ones, and, oh, so hungry. The father took them from their brother's arms without a word, and clasped them to his breast, there, with the water dashing about his horse's flanks and the salt sea wind blowing over him. He rode off with his children, hugging them, sheltering them with his strong right arm, as they squatted in front of his saddle, and guiding his horse with his left hand. This time he took heed of the guide's warning. He walked his horse slowly, picking his way across the flat, choosing

the long stretches of sand upon which the waves had left their print, crossing the river at a spot where the footsteps of the fishermen who had passed but a little while before served as a guide. Of the other son left behind on the rock he was hardly conscious. He did not draw rein till he was in front of the château of Pen-Hoël, where Adèle was standing watching for his return—a fragile figure robed in white, and wrapped in the Indian shawl that had been his wedding gift.

Never had he been so completely her slave as in this moment, when, in her joy at seeing her children, she flung her arms about her husband's neck and kissed him and blessed him, with an impassioned affection which she had never given him till to-day. They all went to the salon together, and mother and father sat in front of the wood fire, warming, comforting, and feeding the cold, hungry children. Then, when the treasures of a foolish woman's love had been poured out upon the restored children, came the bitterness of a weak woman's hate and jealousy for the eldest son. Why had he done this thing? Why had he exposed her darlings to the perils of cold, sickness, death—kept them starving all night upon a bleak unsheltered rock? Why, except to torment and torture her, whom he had

always hated, of whom he had always been wickedly jealous.

‘I have not forgotten the look he gave me when first I came here,’ she said vindictively.

The stepson came into the room while the stepmother was bewailing his wickedness. Pale, haggard, with wild eyes and disordered apparel, he stood before his father.

‘Sébastien, you have given my wife and me a night of agony,’ said Raymond Caradec. ‘What in the name of all that is evil was your motive for endangering the lives of these children?’

‘If their lives were in danger, mine could not be particularly safe,’ answered the young man bitterly.

He felt the slight implied in his father’s speech. His own peril was ignored; he counted for nothing.

‘If my brothers had perished I must have perished with them,’ he said. ‘You don’t suppose I took them to that rock with the intention of passing the night there?’

‘But *I* believe you did,’ cried Adele, pale with passion; ‘I believe you capable of any wickedness against me and mine. You would have left my innocents there to be drowned, while you got away in a boat to Jersey or some-

where ; only your villainous scheme failed, thank God !’

‘Father,’ exclaimed Sébastien, with his eyes aflame, ‘do you believe this infamy of your son ?’

‘I believe nothing. I understand nothing, upon my soul. I don’t know whether to think you a villain or a fool. I know what your mother was, and that the blood in your veins is bad enough.’

‘Stop !’ cried Sébastien, with a voice whose indignant power quelled even an angry father. ‘Not a word about my mother. She is in her grave, and God is the only judge who shall pass sentence on her sins. We have been living very unhappily in this house for a long time. I have been in everybody’s way. I am an outcast in my father’s house as Ishmael was in the house of Abraham—although, heaven knows I never mocked at my stepmother—and I should be happier and better in the wilderness of the outside world. I should have turned my back upon Pen-Hoël before now if it were not for my little brothers, who love me.’

His proud young face softened as he turned to the little ones. They were looking on with eyes that had grown large with wonder, listening to every word, but understanding very little, only scared by a vague sense of unhappiness, the

panic of an atmosphere charged with all bad feelings.

At the word 'love' from the elder brother's lips, the childish faces flushed, and the eyes of the youngest brimmed over.

'Yes, yes, Sébastien, we both love you.'

'As for yesterday's business, it was an accident which might have happened to any one. We had our picnic on the sands, and were turning to go back to the Mount, when Frédéric saw Tombelaine, and asked me to take him and his brother there—was it not so, my child?'

'Yes, yes,' answered Frédéric, the elder boy.

'At first I refused, for the tide was rising, and there was not much time for exploring the rock; but they both begged me. So we ran to Tombelaine, and the children went scrambling over the islet, until they found a seagull's nest, and when they were tired of looking at the nest and the birds they made me take them into the cavern, and while we were groping about in the dark there, playing hide and seek——'

'I wasn't frightened, was I?' cried Louis, the younger boy, 'though it was so dark. Frédéric was, though.'

'While we were at play the tide was rising, and when we came out of the cave the rock was

hemmed round with water—no escape, except by a boat. It was growing dark too, though it was not six o'clock; a mist rising. I shouted with all my might, stood on the highest point of Tombelaine, and shouted as long as I had any strength left, shouted at intervals of a few minutes until it was pitch dark, and then—well, my poor little pets were cold and hungry—we had left our basket with the remains of our dinner within reach of the tide. I had not so much as a bit of bread to give them. We crept into the cave, and I held them in my arms all night, and tried to keep them warm, and I sang to them and told them stories, and they managed to sleep a good deal in spite of the cold, and we heard the wind roaring, and the waves sobbing. It was the middle of the night when the tide went down, and there was a thick white fog over sea and land. I knew the danger of attempting to cross the sands in such a fog, so I waited till morning, though it was a weary thing to sit there and hear the waters slowly creeping around us again in the winter dawn. The tide had not long turned when you rode out to us,' he concluded, addressing his father.

He had never taken his eyes from his father's face while he told his story. Not once had he glanced at his stepmother. He treated Madame

Caradec and her accusations with scathing indifference.

But Raymond had not been unmindful of his wife while his son was speaking. He had noted her sighs and stifled sobs, her writhings of silent agony, her clutches at her children, clasping them to her breast convulsively, as if to save them from a human tiger; and he knew that if he forgave his son too readily for the folly that had cost a night of agony he would be made to rue his indulgence. Hereafter he would be told that he had no real love for his wife or her children, that the son of his dead and gone Hagar was more to him than the offspring of this spotless Sarah.

The strong man was so completely under the dominion of the weak woman that in this crisis of his life Raymond Caradec thought not of what was just and right, but only of how he must needs act to save his wife's tears, to heal her wounded feelings. She had flung her arms round his neck an hour ago, in the hysterical joy of her sons' return, and had laid her pale fair cheek against his, as she had done but few times in their wedded life. His whole being was moved by the tenderness that little gush of love had awakened. It was of her, and her only, he thought as he turned coldly from his first-born.

‘It was a foolish business, and you have given us an infinity of trouble,’ he said.

Sébastien took up his hat and left the room without a word. His teeth were chattering, his lips were blue, his limbs ached from the constrained position in which he had sat half the night through. Nobody had offered to chafe *his* hands and feet before the wood fire yonder, or to administer wine *à la française* and warm food. The little children had been fed and comforted with luxurious fare, and had basked in their mother’s lap before the merrily blazing logs: but for this first-born—this Ishmael—well, there was the kitchen hearth, wider and warmer even than that of the salon, and as much food and wine as he could want. He had but to ask for it. There was all the difference. On one side, mother and father devouring their children with kisses; on the other the kitchen and the old servants, rough peasants for the most part, who could neither read nor write, but who were devoted to Sébastien.

Sébastien did not go to the kitchen for warmth and food. He went out of his father’s house, cold and hungry, as he had entered it. He shook the dust of Pen-Hoël off his feet. ‘*C’est fini, ça,*’ he said to himself. ‘*Va pour le désert.*’

The wilderness he thought of, as he walked

downhill to the bridge that spanned the moat, was that great wilderness of which he had known something in his childhood—that stony-hearted step-mother, Paris, who could be hardly harsher to him than the fair-faced fragile being who had sobbed and sighed him out of his father's house and his father's love. Yes, he would go back to Paris, and work for his bread—work among common labourers if need were, and eat dry bread and drink sour wine ; but the bread and wine should be of his own earning. By the sweat of his brow would he live, as his father Adam lived before him : by the work of his own strong arms and dexterous hands : rather than be a debtor for the decencies and luxuries of a gentleman's life to those who loved him not.

He walked quickly down the chestnut avenue, his heart beating loud with anger and wounded love ; but when he had crossed the old Norman bridge under the portcullis he slackened his steps, and began to think more deliberately of his position. He explored his pockets, and found that his whole stock of worldly wealth consisted of a franc and a half—not a large amount with which to begin the battle of life. He was prepared to walk to Paris ; but he knew that he must eat on the way there, and to eat he must have money. He could live on the humblest fare, sleep in the humblest shelter

that offered itself; but even for black bread and a pallet under a peasant's thatch he must have money.

Father Bressant was the only man to whom Sébastien cared to apply in his need, and the village priest was not so rich as a village innkeeper or a peasant who had saved money; but he knew that the good curé loved him, and would trust him, and that he had been for a long time secretly indignant at the scurvy treatment his pupil received from father and stepmother.

Sébastien went straight to the presbytery, and told the priest his story, unreservedly. The time had come at which he must leave his father's house. There had been no quarrel—he had used no hard words to his father or his father's wife; but there was bad blood between them, and it was best for all that he should go.

Father Bressant argued against this decision. It was a sin for a son to desert his father's house—to take upon himself to choose a life below his own rank in the world.

'It is the life to which my father has degraded me,' answered the young man. 'He has let me eat and drink with his servants; he has left me dependent upon servants for kindness. You know what kind of home I have had up yonder. Can you ask me to go back to it?'

The priest could and did so ask him, considering it his priestly duty ; but when he found that the lad's will was iron in this matter, that he would go to Paris if he starved and begged upon the way—if he arrived there famished, and with bare, bleeding feet—the kind old man opened his purse, and gave all its contents to his pupil, a sum of nine and a half louis. He forced the whole amount upon Sébastien, who declared that a quarter of it would be enough.

‘ You don't know how long it may be before you get work in Paris,’ he said. ‘ Food and fuel are dear there ; you will find it difficult to live. Why not try St. Malo, or Rennes ?’

‘ Too near home ; too cramped and narrow,’ answered Sébastien. ‘ I want to be lost in a great crowd ; forgotten in the wilderness of working-men, until I can make myself beloved and respected for my own sake. You know that though I am no Solomon, I am pretty clever with my hands. I can use a carpenter's tools, or a mason's hammer. I shall get work in Paris, you may be sure, and shall learn more there in a week than I could learn in a year at Pen-Hoël. I shall disgrace nobody, I shall vex nobody, I shall be in no one's way. They set me down as a boor, an ignoramus, up yonder, Father Bressant,’ with a jerk of his head

in the direction of Pen-Hoël, 'because I have kept company with gamekeepers and fishermen, having no better company offered me, mark you ; but I feel that it is in me to be of some use in the world ; and I would rather dig for sand on the shores of the Couësnon, than lead the life I am leading now.'

'If you go to Paris you will fall in with Republicans and Freethinkers ; you will forget your God,' sighed the priest.

'I think not, father. My belief in the God of truth and justice, of mercy and love, lies pretty deep in my heart. That faith has comforted me often when life went hard with me. I don't think it will be plucked out by the first bad company I may fall among. I have heard men sneer at all those things you have taught me before to-day, and have let their words go by me like the wind. I am not afraid of what Paris can do to me.'

Father Bressant sighed again, and shook his head dolorously. He was an old man, a believer in Papal supremacy and the elder Bourbons. He hated Republicans and Bonapartists. And Paris was just now a divided camp, occupied by these two heresies, the Red Republicanism of Louis Blanc and Changarnier, the masked Imperialism of the Prince-President.

The priest gave Sébastien a kind of testimonial

or certificate of identity and good character, which might serve him in default of other papers when he went in search of employment; and then the two, master and pupil, walked together for a mile or so on the first stage of the young man's journey; and then they parted, with eyes not innocent of tears. The outcast stood on a little knoll beside the road, looking back at the kind old man's bent shoulders, and white hair falling upon his rusty black cassock. Sébastien watched the stooping figure until it vanished in the perspective of tangled bramble and chestnut and ash, as the parallel lines of high unshorn hedges melted into one. Never till this moment had it occurred to him what an old man his tutor was. Should they two ever meet again? he wondered. He must work his hardest, and make haste to restore the money borrowed to-day, lest the good old priest's declining days should be made harder for the lack of that little store. He must be sparing, too, and live on bread and water rather than impose upon his old friend's generosity.

Having this in his mind, he denied himself the indulgence of the diligence, when, on inquiring at Avranches, he discovered that the journey to Paris would cost him something over three louis. The autumnal weather was capital

for walking — albeit the shortness of the late October days was an inconvenience ; but Sébastien was fearless and hardy, and was used to roaming after nightfall. He tramped somewhat wearily into the narrow streets of Villedieu, luminous with its furnaces and copper-mills, when the church clock was chiming the first quarter after ten, looking about him for a shelter which should be cheap and decent. It was nearly eleven before he found such a lodging ; but later, as he advanced upon his journey, from Villedieu to Thorigny, and that wooded heart of Normandy known as the Bocage, thence to Caen, and from Caen to Lisieux and Evreux, he grew cleverer in finding quarters for the night, and contrived to spend very little of Father Bressant's money ; and he had only spent five-and-twenty francs in all when he entered the great city in the wintry twilight, friendless, houseless, unknown, but his own master, and possessed of the infinite riches of youth and hope.

CHAPTER V.

‘SWEET TO THE SOUL, AND HEALTH TO THE BONES.’

RAYMOND CARADEC’S runaway son stood in the midst of the great city, where the river flows between the old Palace of the Medicis and the new Palace of the Legislature, spanned by historic bridges, darkened by the shadows of historic towers; a river whose waters, lapping against the granite quay with a little babbling sound like the prattle of a child, could tell of tragedy and comedy, death, sin, vice, hate, love, mirth, woe, were it a little more articulate; a river which, to the mind of the man who knows Paris, *does* recall a world of strange and terrible memories; a river which has run red with blood in the days that are gone. On that fatal vigil of St. Bartholomew, for example, when the streets were heaped with Huguenot corpses, and King Charles’s cut-throats held their obscene orgies amid the slain, what time the king himself looked out of his window in the Louvre yonder, arquebus levelled, animating the butchery with his shouts,

shooting at the fugitives who tried to swim the stream. The river will be flecked with sanguine stains once again, before he who looks across the water to-night in this October of 1850 is much older.

To the young man from the green hillside yonder across the Couësnon, Paris to-night seemed altogether a strange city. He had never taken kindly to the long, narrow streets of tall houses, or even to the glittering boulevard, with its formal avenue of young trees. But he had come to Paris for a purpose, come to win his independence, to earn freedom, fearlessness, and the right to hope. He had fed for the last year or so upon stories of men who had entered Paris shoeless, shirtless, carrying a few rags in an old cotton handkerchief, a few sous for total reserve fund against starvation, and who years afterwards had become men of mark, a power in the city. He came stuffed to the brim with ambition; believing in himself, without conceit or arrogance, but with that unquestionable faith in his own force and his own capacity which cannot be plucked from the breast of the conqueror elect in the world's strife.

One who has studied the philosophy of Bohemianism has said that from the hour in which the penniless man leaves off trying to get work and sits down in his hunger and his shabbiness that man is lost. And in every great city there are two classes

of men, the workers and the loungers; the latter with a natural bent towards the gutter; the former brave, patient, heroic, and bound to win. The idler talks of bad luck. '*Pas de chance*' is his favourite motto. The worker seizes the twin demons of poverty and obscurity as the infant Hercules throttled the snakes that beset his cradle. The struggle may be long and weary. Life is a waiting race, in which the best horse is bound to win.

And now night was closing in, and the traveller had to find himself a shelter before the police grew troublesome. He was travelling at a disadvantage, without papers, save that certificate of the parish priest's; and he had been sharply interrogated an hour ago at the Octroi. He remembered the names of two spots in Paris—the theatre at which his mother acted, and the rue de Shelas, the dreary street of tall, stone, barrack-like houses, a new street beyond the rue Poissonnière, where his mother had died. He had hated the street with a deadly hatred; and yet to night, friendless and alone, he turned his face automatically towards the last home he had known in Paris.

The rue de Shelas seemed at the other end of the world to this tired wanderer, who had tramped so many weary miles under good and evil weather within the last week. He had made this last day's

march longer than that of any previous day, and he was thoroughly beaten. He had bought himself a blouse and a coloured shirt at Caen, and his coat and fine linen were tied in a little bundle slung across his shoulder. He was clad as workmen are clad, yet he did not look like a workman; and the blouses he met on his way glanced at him suspiciously, as at a wolf in sheep's clothing. He left the glitter and dazzle of the lighted boulevard as soon as he could, and plunged into the labyrinth of murky streets, through which the interminable rue de Lafayette now pierces, a mighty artery leading from wealth to poverty, from idleness to labour, from daintiness and delight to hard fare and anxious hearts, from the *gommeux* to the blouse. It was long before Sébastien turned into the well-remembered street, which stood upon the verge of civilisation in those days—dreary waste places and houses newly begun surrounding it on all sides.

It was only eight years since Sébastien had looked his last upon that sordid quarter, from the fly in which he sat, timid, unquestioning, at his father's side. And yet he had an idea that everybody he had known in that period of his existence would be dead and buried. He expected to find old landmarks swept away. The early years of life are so long, heart and brain so ardent,

outpacing Time the plodder, who becomes Time the galloper in after-years. The street was there; the house was there. Sébastien remembered the number, a big black figure of seven, painted upon each side of the door. He looked up at the front of the house, and it seemed to him like the Tower of Babel: windows above windows, lighted and dark, curtained, uncurtained. The house was there, but the people he had known were dead most likely—dead or gone away. He rang the bell, and the door was opened by some invisible means, whereupon he entered, and beheld a short, middle-aged, slatternly woman sitting at a table in a little room on the left of the stone passage. It was exactly the same figure he used to see there in days gone by—the same face, not older by an hour, it seemed to him—the greasy black gown, the large sallow face surmounted by a red cotton kerchief arranged as a cap, the long brass earrings. It was the same fat Jewess who had kept the house and tyrannised over the lodgers. But although Sébastien remembered Madame Rigol the portress, that substantial matron had utterly forgotten him. The *gamin* of eleven, too frail and small for his years, had developed into a broad-shouldered youth of nineteen, six feet two, with the limbs and carriage of an athlete.

‘ Can I have a room here ? ’ the young man asked ; whereupon Madame Rigol, as in duty bound, took out a greasy ledger, and put the stranger through a kind of catechism, before she would allow him the privilege of admission to that stony paradise.

He answered the questions exactly as he liked, drawing freely upon his imagination ; and Madame Rigol put down what he told her in a purely mechanical way. His name ? Ishmael. Christian name ? Ishmael also. Curious ! but Madame Rigol was used to queer names in that greasy register, and she put down ‘ Ishmael Ishmael ’ without a word. When it came to the question of papers, she put ‘ S.P. ’ (*sans papiers*), and the business was settled. But her face and manner became keen and eager when she asked him for a month’s rent, eighteen francs, in advance ; and, this given, she was perfectly satisfied.

She took a particular key from a board adorned with almost as many keys as a pianoforte, and went panting up the winding stone staircase to show the new lodger to his room. The odours upon that greasy stair were almost unendurable to the young man whose nostrils still remembered the fresh sweet air of fields and hedgerows, the salt breath of the sea. He felt that life must be

terrible in such a den. But he need come there only for the night's rest, he argued with himself. He would have the whole of Paris for his dwelling-place by day. A man must have a shelter, were it never so bad. And he had made up his mind to be sparing of good Father Bressant's cash. Poverty must not be over-nice.

Madame Rigol panted on, getting more asthmatical with every stair, till she opened a door on the fifth story, and ushered the new lodger into a bare little white-washed den, with an old wooden bedstead and the sparest provision in the way of furniture. But there was a stove, on which the portress put some stress, as indicating an excess of luxury, and there was a window through which the wintry stars were shining. The room had not been occupied for some time, and felt cold and damp; but there were no foul smells here, and Madame Rigol volunteered to light a fire for the traveller, and even to make him some coffee. The lad's handsome face and frank manner made her kindly disposed to him. She went downstairs to fetch materials for fire and coffee, while Sébastien surveyed the dark outside world from the window.

Lamps glimmered here and there in the darkness below. He saw the external boulevard yonder—a long gray line—and beyond lay that dreary border-

land of waste and squalor which in those days stretched between the outskirts of the town and the fortifications—that master-work of the Citizen King's reign, master-work which had cost the king his popularity. It was a dismal quarter of the town. Yonder, folded in the shadows of night, lay the cemetery of Montmartre, the field of rest. Sébastien could only distinguish the spot afar off, by the darkness which brooded over the place of graves. She was lying under those shadows—that unhappy mother, the sinner, lost on earth, to be redeemed, he hoped, in heaven: for if a future state be needed for the good, how much more for the sinners—not for their punishment, but for their reclamation! Sébastien thought of his dead mother to-night with deepest sadness. She had sinned; she had outraged her husband, the common law of morality. Yet, in her first fall, might there not have been some blame due elsewhere? His father was a hard man. There were times when Sébastien had told himself that the master of Pen-Hoël had a stone instead of a heart. He was tender enough, nevertheless, to the weak self-indulgent second wife. He had grown senile in middle age, the slave of a selfish woman's feeble prettiness.

Madame Rigol came in presently, puffing like a steam-engine, but beaming with good-nature. She

was of the college-bedmaker's temper, and liked a young bachelor, for whom she could perform those small services which are rarely unremunerative. She explained to Sébastien as she lighted the fire and brewed the coffee that any service she rendered him in this way would be a question apart. The rent was paid to the landlord; that was a fixed sum; no profit accrued to her therefrom. But if it were in arrear, by all the sacred names in the calendar, was not she (Madame Rigol) made to suffer? As a stranger in Paris, perhaps Monsieur would like her to provide his breakfast every morning. It would be but a matter of a few sous.

Sébastien thanked her, but declined the favour.

'I shall have to live as other workmen live,' he said, 'and I must go out at daybreak. I shall breakfast anyhow—anywhere.'

She asked him what his trade was.

'A mason,' he answered boldly.

'Monsieur is a *gâcheur*, no doubt; he is too young, surely, to be a *limousinant*,' ejaculated Madame, scrutinising him sharply.

His hands were bronzed and roughened by an outdoor life, broadened by a good deal of amateur carpentering, but they were not the hands of a stonemason.

He had not the faintest notion what these technical distinctions meant, so he only nodded his head and knelt down by the stove to warm his hands.

‘ There was a theatre somewhere hereabouts—the Escurial ? ’ he said.

Madame Rigol threw up her hands. A theatre ! but yes, an altogether admirable theatre ; but it had failed three years ago. The manager had spent too much on his fairy spectacles, people said. And then there had been lions, tigers, rope-dancers, a circus, what you will. *Pas de chance !* The poor man was now at Clichy, and the Escurial had become a *café-chantant*.

‘ Ah ! ’ Madame sighed, and stuck her arms akimbo, ‘ the loveliest woman that ever walked those boards lived and died in this house. She had but one fault, the poor dear soul ! ’

Sébastien bent his head lower over the little black stove, and said not a word. But when once Madame Rigol was fairly launched on the flood of talk, she required no assistance to keep her going.

‘ Oh, but she was a lovely creature, a magnificent woman ! ’ she exclaimed. ‘ A little *passée*, perhaps, when she came to this house. She had *lived*. She had occupied a palace in the wood beyond Passy. Her carriages, horses, diamonds,

laces, cashmeres — splendid! fit for a princess! And then there came an end of all that. She was of a passionate nature, and wine maddened her. She quarrelled with a millionaire — twice millionaire—who adored her; and when she came here she could not live without her little taste of cognac. It was a slow poison, and I saw her die by inches.’

‘What became of her maid?’ asked Sébastien.

‘What, you knew them?’ exclaimed the portress.

‘She must have had some kind of servant,’ answered Sébastien, neither admitting nor denying.

‘Naturally. She had a companion—a servant, if you will—Lisette Fontaine. Lisette acted *soubrettes* at the Escorial. She was the delight of all the *gamins* in the faubourg. They called after her as she walked along the street. That is popularity, mark you. She left this house soon after Madame’s death, and took a smarter lodging nearer the theatre, and afterwards she went to the new theatre at Belleville.’

‘Is she there now, do you suppose?’ asked Sébastien eagerly.

He would have given a great deal to see Lisette—not altogether a perfect woman, perhaps. But she had been almost his only friend in those

sad early days which ended in the gloom of death, within these walls.

‘No. She left the theatre a year ago. Some say that she married a *charcutier* in the quarter, others that she eloped with a nobleman. I have never been able to find out what became of her.’

Sébastien left his coffee-pot on the stove, and went out into the streets to buy himself some supper. He would not be treated like a fine gentleman by Madame Rigol. He wanted to cater for himself, and rough it like the commonest labourer in Paris. That rough beginning was a feature in the programme of all those successful careers which he had heard of.

It was growing late, but there were shops still open in this squalid quarter—a wine shop, among others, which was also an ordinary at which workmen dined off a substantial meal of soup and meat, with bread included, for seven sous. Sébastien—henceforth Ishmael—went into this little eating and drinking house, and took a supper of bread and cheese, while he listened to the conversation round him. Presently he ventured to talk to some workmen who were smoking and drinking cheap red wine at the table where he sat. Could they tell him anything about the masons of Paris? Where could a man get work?

‘Are you a skilled mason?’ asked one of them.

‘No; but I am strong, and I am not afraid of work.’

‘That means you have never handled a hammer in your life,’ said the man, inclined to sneer. ‘You may get employment as a bricklayer’s labourer, perhaps, to hand the bricks or to mix mortar—*gâcheur* or *garçon*, they call him. A *garçon* earns as much as three francs a day. But even that is difficult for a stranger.’

‘I am not afraid of difficulty,’ answered Ishmael.

The man told him where to look for work; and he was out next morning at daybreak, visiting all the new constructions of the quarter. It was not till he had wandered as far as Belleville that he got a promise of employment. There were hands enough for the job at present; but the foreman liked the look of the young stranger’s broad shoulders, and he should take the place of the first *gâcheur* who chose to *chômer*. Ishmael waited about all day, looking at the work going on, and familiarising himself with the duties of a *gâcheur*. He dined on the *ordinaire* at the little wine shop, sitting at the same table as before, and beginning to feel accustomed to the place.

It was not so terrible an ordeal to him to descend into this lower grade as it must have been to a spoiled favourite of fortune. He had associated with peasants in his own home; but these Parisian workmen seemed to him creatures of a coarser clay. They were infinitely cleverer; but their cleverness was unholy, devilish. They believed in nothing—neither in the goodness of God nor of man. They scoffed at all sacred things in the past and the present.

Political feeling ran high. The Republic was not republican enough to please the majority. There were a few Bonapartists who would like to see the old Imperial eagle spread his wings over the greater part of the civilised world once more—who wanted the wars of Italy and Egypt, Germany and Spain over again. But these were in a weak minority. There were malcontents who had never forgiven the closing of the national workshops; others who abused Louis Blanc for having promised a millennium which he was unable to realise.

‘Charlatans all,’ said one. ‘What can these white-handed gentry know of the rights of labour? Working men will never be properly governed till a working-man is President.’

‘Down with presidents! What do we want

with a President?’ cried another, growing husky over his quart of wine at twelve sous, and his garlic sausage. ‘Your President is only a monarch in disguise. He is a leech who sucks the blood of the working-man. To-day his ministers modestly ask for two million francs out of the public purse—to-morrow they will ask twice as much. A few years ago he was an adventurer in America, dependent upon Louis Philippe’s bounty; after that a prisoner at Ham; and then a gentleman at large in the streets of London, waiting upon fortune. And now he and his friends—Morny and Fialin, *soi-disant* Persigny—have all the trump cards in their hands. He has the army at his orders—can shoot us all down whenever the fancy seizes him. The Government of France should be a great confederation of working-men—a small minority of men who work with their brains, an enormous majority of men who work with their hands—every man to have a direct influence upon the legislature, every man——’

‘If there were no court the higher branches of trade would stagnate,’ said a cabinet-maker. ‘Whether it is at the Elysée or the Tuileries, we must have a court. They say that if the Prince-President were Emperor, and had things his own

way, trade would be better than it has been since the time of Louis XIV.'

This provoked unanimous derision. It was the *bourgeoisie* who had a hankering for the glitter and swagger of an empire, not the working classes. What they wanted was trade union, otherwise trade despotism, international societies, syndicates, co-operation, the power to dictate terms to their employers.

Sébastien, otherwise Ishmael, sat still and heard everything. His eager receptive intellect caught the spirit of the present moment, steeped itself in the surrounding atmosphere. He was of good blood; bore an ancient name; but pride of race had shown itself to him on its darker side. He was ready to be as much a leveller as the strongest democrat there. He listened, and believed the worst that was said against the man who held the reins of the state chariot—always a hated personage with one particular section of the Parisian world. He, who had nothing to look to but labour to win him a place in the world, friends, fortune, fame, was ready to exalt the nobility of labour, to assert the rights of the working-man as against heaven-born generals and senators paid by the state.

Ishmael was on the ground at Belleville at six

o'clock next morning ; and before ten he was taken on to the works in the capacity of a *gâcheur*, the foreman instructing him in the rudimentary arts of that office. The Parisian workman is given to *chômage*, rarely works more than four days a week, and a vacancy of this kind is not long in arising. Thus before he had been three days in the great city Sébastien found himself in the way of earning his bread. He was to be paid two francs and a half a day for his labour, and he was to give one franc out of the two and a half to the foreman for his bounty in taking on an untried hand; a youth without recommendation or papers. But the gain of thirty sous a day was a solid fact, and Sébastien felt that he had passed the first mile-post on the long high-road that leads to fortune.

Had he come to Paris crowned with laurels from a provincial university, rich in medals and diplomas, the writer of a prize poem, the discoverer of a new planet, the inventor of a new mode of locomotion, charged with science or poetry, as with the electric current—in a word a genius, he would inevitably have spent the first few years of his city life in rags and starvation ; perhaps to end his days untimely by a few sous' worth of charcoal, or a leap from one of the bridges. But as he was passing ignorant, and brought only his youth,

his strength, and the cunning of his hands to the great labour market, he obtained employment immediately.

He not only found a place in the mighty wheel, but he kept it. He was sober where other men were given to drink—he was earnest, patient, industrious, ambitious, among men who for the most part were idle *flâneurs* on the boulevard or loungers in the street—for the Boulevard de la Chapelle and the Passage Ménilmontant have their idlers as well as the Boulevard des Capucines or the Place de la Madeleine.

He was scoffed at for his virtues, suspected for his superior air and manners, his reserve as to his antecedents. He was called Mouchard, Orleanist, Chouan, in disguise; but he held his peace, and went his way, offending no one; yet with a look of reserved force which indicated that it were not over-safe to be offensive to him. To the fellow-workmen who were inclined to be friendly he was civil, listened to their wrongs and discussed their claims, and the privileges for which they clamoured. Little by little he caught the tone of his surroundings, and was almost as Parisian as his companions; but he never sank to their level. Instinctively, without a hint from the man

himself—save that implied in the name which he bore—they penetrated the secret of his existence. He was a gentleman by birth, the cast-off son of a noble father. They called him the marquis, not in derision, for at nineteen he had the tone of a man born to be the leader of men. He did not long remain a *gâcheur*, condemned to stir lime and sand in a smoking heap. He showed himself skilful enough to be set to better work before he had been three weeks in the employment of the Belleville builder. The work upon which he was engaged was the erection of a block of workmen's houses, the beginning of a mighty boulevard, great white stone mansions rising gigantic from the midst of a broad plateau, fringed on the further side by the squalid courts and alleys of Ménilmontant; wooden sheds, houses of plaster and canvas, the dens and lairs of abject poverty and reckless crime—seething boil-pot of want, vice, disease, misery, into which the police made an occasional raid in pursuit of some arch-offender at peril of their lives.

The builder was not slow to notice a youth who would work, who worked as if his muscular arm delighted in its labour, as if the choral swing of the hammer were to him as the melody of a bridal song. He picked Sébastien out from the

ruck, heard his story—hypothetical story—from the foreman, and observed him afterwards with a keener interest. After all there is something in good blood, and, when a gentleman does take it into his head to work, Jacques Bonhomme is handicapped against him. This was what the builder said to himself as he watched the muscular form—straight, slim, and tall—the finely shaped head so loftily posed upon the neck of a young Alcides, the clearly cut yet massive features, marked brows, aquiline nose, falcon eye, a mouth firm as if moulded out of marble. No common workman this assuredly, and yet he lived as the other men lived, went to his seven-sous ordinary or his *tapis franc* after his work, and had a nest high up in one of those dreary barracks yonder, near the new hospital, which had been built with the bequest of a benevolent lady, by name Laborissière.

One of Sébastien's first acts on finding himself in the way of earning his bread was to send Father Bressant the bulk of his money. There was a deficiency of two louis and a half for the month's rent and the expenses of the journey, but this sum Sébastien meant to make good out of his savings before he was many months older. Life is passing cheap in a great city to vigorous, temperate, self-denying youth. Nas-

myth, a young man reared in the comfort and elegance of a successful artist's household, had the courage to live the first year of his London life upon ten shillings a week—a voluntary sacrifice to the spirit of manly independence, since larger means were well within his reach—and, in so doing, set an example to industrious youth which should endure for all time—a nobler thing than even the hammer which made his name for ever famous. And Sébastien Caradec had the Nasmyth temper, the love of mechanical work for its own sake, the eye and the hand of the artist in stone or in iron.

CHAPTER VI.

‘THE END OF THAT MIRTH IS HEAVINESS.’

TIME out of mind the faubourg St. Antoine has been the quarter of furniture dealers and furniture makers. Of late years there has been an invasion of German workmen in the quarter, to the detriment of native talent; but in 1850 the *ébénistes* of Paris were for the most part Frenchmen who had succeeded to the primitive and scarcely improved tools of Boule and his sons. Here and there, even in these latter days, a native of Paris holds his own against the thrifty hard-working and hard-living square-heads, and by the delicacy of his workmanship and the grace of his designs demonstrates that the glory of the French *ébéniste*, the artist-artisan whose work was once renowned all the civilized world over, has not utterly departed.

Such an one was Père Lemoine, a man well on in his seventh decade, more or less of a drunkard always, and betimes an idler, but an artist to the tips of his finger-nails. Had Père Lemoine abjured

the bottle and worked steadily in the years that were gone he would have occupied a very different lodging from that wretched ground-floor den looking into the yard of a huge barrack-like pile, between a patch of waste land and a little cluster of filthy courts and alleys, the remnant of a past age—alleys that had seen the fall of the Bastille and the days of the Red Terror; alleys in which the glorious memories of July were still fresh, and which had sent forth their contingent of revolt in '32 and in '48. Père Lemoine might have been at the top of the tree, an illustrious ornament to the furniture trade, said the dealers and the middlemen who knew the man and his work. But for that man who will only work when driven by absolute want, who loves not his art for its own sake, and who would rather wallow among a herd of other wallowers in some low drinking cellar, than sit beside the cheery hearth of a prosperous home, there is no hope. Upon the downward path which that man treads there is no end but the pauper's grave.

Père Lemoine might have been a master in the trade, and he was a slave—a rich man, and he was a beggar: but he had taken his own way of living, and he was wont in his cups to defend his choice between the two great high-roads of life. Well, he would argue, he was as poor as Job. There were

men with not a tithe of his talent who had made fortunes ; but what would you ?—it was not his nature to be a drudge. The man who makes a fortune by his trade is your stolid, mindless mechanic, your mere machine of a man, your sordid plodder, who never shares a measure of vitriol or a litre of little-blue with a friend, or takes a night’s pleasure—a fish-blooded creature, content to starve and pinch himself and his family, and to toil early and late for thirty years or so in order to be rich at the dull end of his dreary life, when such poor senses as he possessed at the beginning are half-dead within him.

‘I don’t envy such a slave his frock-coat and his fine house at Asnières, or his money in the funds,’ exclaimed Père Lemoine contemptuously, lolling over the stained old marble table at his favourite *brasserie*, ‘The Faithful Pig.’ ‘A man who has not enjoyed friendship, good company, a song or a dance, good wine, and his *polichinelle* of cognac now and then at a merry rendezvous like this—such a man, I say, has never lived. *Nom d’un caniche !* what should I do with a frock-coat or a villa in the suburbs? I detest the country, and I love to take my ease in my blouse and my slippers. I have worn a frock-coat in my day—I who talk to you ; and I tell you that the day is not far distant when

we shall all wear blouses, when there will be no more fine gentlemen, and the frock-coat will go the way of red heels and hair powder—to the gutter, to the rag-heap, with all such trumpery! There is no true nobility but in the man himself. Thews, sinews, heart, brains—there is your only patent of rank.'

Not much nobility in the speaker sprawling across the table in that low den of 'The Faithful Pig'—an inner and sacred apartment devoted exclusively to regular customers. And such customers! There were men in dubious linen and sham jewellery, tawdry, fine, audacious, whose only trade was iniquity. There were girls still in the very dawn of girlhood, yet steeped to the lips in the knowledge of evil, hovering near the crowded tables, and exchanging infamous jests with the drinkers: shabby finery, slipshod feet, glassy eyes, a hectic flush upon hollow cheeks—the livery of vice, the stamp of early death; and amidst the Babel of voices, the crescendo of oaths, the reek of coarse tobacco and coarser spirits, there sounded the melancholy strains of a cracked tenor, as an old *cabotin*, at a table in a corner—thirty years ago a famous opera-singer and spoilt darling of duchesses—sang a sentimental ballad about the old house at home and the mother's grave, to a little

circle of half-tipsy amateurs. The fouler the atmosphere, the viler the place and the people, the more certain was the success of that plaintive ditty. The old *cabotin* had lived upon it for the last seven years, ever since he left off trying to exist respectably as a teacher of singing—*coureur de cachets*—in the faubourg St.-Germain.

It was in this low haunt that the *trolleur* spent his evenings—for him veritable *noctes ambrosianæ*. After all, the atmosphere of man's happiness does not depend upon the laws of abstract beauty: or who would not set sail for the spicy isles of the Indian Ocean, or the silent forests beside the Amazon? A man's idea of happiness is the life which suits him best; and to drink, and talk, and laugh, and denounce the powers that be, in a low tavern, was Père Lemoine's ideal existence. He came to 'The Faithful Pig' with alacrity every evening, in fair weather or foul. He left late in the night with fond regret. There were nights, indeed, when he never left at all, but lay all his length among the sawdust beside the pewter counter, *cuvant son vin*, till the cold gray dawn stared in at him through the holes in the shutter, and the *garçon* came, sleepy and unwashed, to open the windows and broom away the traces of last night's orgy.

Père Lemoine, taking his life thus easily, had never yet been able to extricate himself from the clutches of the middle-man. He worked as he liked, when he liked, in his own den. When he had finished a piece of furniture—cabinet, *escritoire*, *bonheur du jour*, as the case might be—he summoned his agent and ally, an Auvergnat, known in Parisian slang as a *charabia*, who put the article on his truck and carried it round to the furniture-dealers, to dispose of it for the best price he could get; and then there was played, over and over again, a neat little comedy in three acts, wherein the *trolleur* enacted the pigeon and the *charabia* the hawk—a little plot so transparent that old Lemoine, who was no fool, must have seen through it after very few repetitions; only it suited his temper better to be duped over and over again, to be the prey of an ignorant peasant who had begun life as a shoeblack on the boulevard du Temple, than to work hard and live temperately.

The first act of the comedy consisted of two scenes. Scene 1, the departure of the *charabia* in the morning with the piece of furniture, cheery, jocund, full of hope; scene 2, the return of that faithful Auvergnat at eventide, gloomy and despairing. The furniture trade is going to the dogs, he declares. France is on the eve of a revolution, and

people are afraid to furnish houses which may be consumed in the general bonfire next week. He has hawked that *escritoire*, a masterpiece, all over Paris, and not a dealer would bid for it. End of act i.

Act ii. consists of a single scene: return of the *charabia* three days after to say that he has found a dealer who will give just half the price Lemoine has asked for that *escritoire*. Lemoine, in low water, but not quite run dry, declines.

Act iii. occurs a week later. By this time Lemoine has exchanged his last sous for cheap cognac, alias vitriol, and is an easy prey for the Auvergnian hawk. The benevolent *charabia* comes to offer a kindness. He is only a poor messenger, a hewer of wood and a carrier of water; he cannot pay as the rich merchant would pay, he does not want the furniture at all, and if he offers anything for it he does so out of pure good nature, to oblige his employer. He will not offer as little as that miserly dealer in the rue Vivienne, a man who has half the nobility for his customers; no, he will give ten per cent. more than that Harpagon offered. Lemoine, languishing for more vitriol and the intellectual society of ‘The Faithful Pig,’ accepts the offer, parts with his handiwork for half its value, and thus affords the *charabia* the oppor-

tunity of growing rich, and of blossoming some day into a prosperous furniture-dealer in the faubourg St. Antoine.

Naturally, this little comedy cannot be played too frequently. The *charabia* must sometimes perform his commission with approximate fidelity. But the game may be played a good many times in the course of a year with such a man as Père Lemoine, whose alcoholised brain has long lost the capacity for remembering the details of a year's existence. '*Vogue la galère*' is the drunkard's motto.

The Lemoines, husband and wife, had lived in that ground-floor den in the rue Sombreuil for nearly forty years. The house had been built not long after the Terror, while the fall of the old fortress prison-house yonder was yet green in the memory of those who watched the barrack-like pile rising from the dreariness of a level waste. Père Lemoine could just remember the wreck of the Bastille. The roar of cannon, and the cries of a maddened crowd were the earliest sounds he could recall as he looked backward along the cloudy avenue of the past. The picture of those days when he was a barefooted little *galopin* at his father's knees seemed far more vivid than that of ten years ago. He was a married

man and a father long before the Revolution of July, 1830, which drove Charles X. into exile and gave France her Citizen King. He and his wife were among the crowd at the review on the boulevard du Temple, when Fieschi's infernal machine exploded, and Marshal Mortier fell dead by the side of his king.

There was nothing that Père Lemoine remembered in his life better than the building of the rue Sombreuil. He had played as a barefooted *gamin* among the builder's rubbish, the stone-dust and shavings, had watched the carpenters at work, and the *gâcheur* mixing his mortar, had seen the tall white houses rise stone by stone out of the ground. His father was an *ébéniste* like himself, working independently at his own goodwill, just as Père Lemoine worked now; and as soon as the boy was old enough to hold hammer or chisel he began to learn his father's trade. There was an elder brother, a soldier, following the fortunes of the First Consul, and there was a sister who worked at a great military outfitter's in the faubourg du Temple, and who came home at night with arms and fingers aching, after ten hours' stitching at serge coats and trousers.

It was a great epoch for the Lemoine family when they moved into the ground-floor rooms on the

· south side of the big white house. It was all so clean, so white, so dazzling, such a contrast to the narrow alley from which they emerged—a darksome passage where all the houses looked as if they were on the point of falling into each other's arms, a passage steeped in the foulness of centuries, reeking with indescribable odours. In this new white barrack all the sanitary conditions were as vile as they could be, no one knowing or caring about sanitation in those days. But the house was new, and foul odours had not had time to grow.

The Lemoines were prosperous in those early days of Consulate and Empire, prosperous because industrious and temperate. Pierre's father was a first-rate workman, and although it pleased him to be independent, and to supply the dealers at his own pleasure, he was regular in his habits, and turned out plenty of work in the year. At twenty young Lemoine married a neighbour's daughter, and took his wife home to the family nest. There was a slip of a room off the living room, which did well enough for the young couple. The elder brother was otherwise accommodated, far off in a foreign grave. He had fallen at Auerstadt, and his sword and a smoky wreath of immortelles hanging above the chimneypiece, amidst Mère Lemoine's *batterie de cuisine*, were the only tokens left of his existence.

The mother owed her dead boy's sword to the thoughtful kindness of a young officer, who had since that time trodden the same dark road, and found a grave on the great highway to Russia.

When the Citizen King came to rule over his loving subjects, Père et Mère Lemoine the elder were both dead, and Pierre and his wife lived in the rue Sombreuil with their only child, a pale graceful girl of nineteen, with large violet eyes, and chestnut hair which was the admiration of all the gossips in the neighbourhood. Pierre and his wife were known as *père et mère*, and the last generation was forgotten.

Mère Lemoine and her daughter did not get on very happily together. The mother was a person of fretful disposition, given to tears, and not innocent of a liking for wine and spirits. She was not a confirmed drunkard in those days, but she was just beginning a system of secret tippling which must inevitably lead to a bad end. Jeanneton, the daughter, was fond of pleasure, and somewhat vain of her pale, fair prettiness, which had won her too many outspoken compliments from students and clerks as she went to her work across the river yonder, in the Quartier Latin, a dangerous neighbourhood for youth and beauty in those days.

Père Lemoine had apprenticed his daughter to a

clear-starcher in a good way of business in a dull, shabby street near the rue de Fleurus; but dull and shabby as the street was, it boasted one of the most popular restaurants in the students' quarter, a house called The 'Pantagruel,' in which all the quick-witted dare-devils of the Sorbonne and the Maison Dieu loved to assemble, and where they made and unmade dynasties and governments, or fancied they did, which was almost the same thing.

At first Jeanneton rebelled sorely against her apprenticeship to the art of clear-starching; it was killing, cruel, abominable, she told her parents. There was no other trade in all Paris that would have been so hateful. It was spirit-breaking drudgery to stand stooping over an ironing-board all day ironing shirt-fronts and goffering frills. In 1832 the frilled shirt-front was not yet altogether exploded. There were elderly gentlemen who still wore those decorations. The whole business was distasteful to Jeanneton. She complained of the heat of the stoves, the weight of the irons, the smell of the starch; and she came home of an evening white as the shirts she had ironed, and dissolved into tears at the least word of reproach. Her appetite was wretched.

Moved by these complaints, Mère Lemoine herself began to make a trouble of her daughter's

avocation, and had more than one violent quarrel with her husband on the subject. Père Lemoine was well started upon the downward course by this time, and spent half his earnings upon cheap brandy. The girl was dying by inches, Mère Lemoine told her husband; it was a blackamoor's slavery to which he had sold her yonder, and they were not a penny the richer for her sufferings.

'Perhaps you would rather she were in the streets,' growled Lemoine, who 'thought clear-starching a genteel trade, and that he had done very well for his daughter when he got her accepted as pupil of Madame Rebèque, at the sign of the 'Garden of Eden,' without a sous of premium. When she had worked for Madame a year gratis, she was to receive twelve francs a week, which was to be increased six months afterwards to eighteen. At the outfitters in the faubourg du Temple his sister had never earned more than two francs a day, toiling early and late; and the stooping over her work all day had given her a chest complaint, which carried her to Père Lachaise before she was thirty.

Lemoine would hear of no complainings. He was not a duke or a millionaire, he protested savagely, but an honest mechanic, and his daughter must work as he worked; which comparison, seeing that

Père Lemoine seldom laboured more than three days out of the seven, hardly bore upon the case of a girl who had to go to her work every morning, except Sunday, at six o'clock, and was seldom free to come home till seven.

The tears and sullen looks went on for about six months. Then came a change. Smiles, alacrity, a more careful toilet, the poor little cotton gown and grisette's muslin cap adjusted as jauntily as if they had been the satin and leghorn of a countess. The mother and father heard the girl singing as she went to her work in the cold early morning, long before they thought of leaving their dingy pallets.

'She has got the better of all that nonsense, and is growing fond of her trade,' said Père Lemoine. 'See how wise we were not to listen to her rigmaroles! That is the only way to manage a girl of her age. They are as full of fancies as the great ham fair is full of mountebanks and pickpockets.'

After this period of joyousness and alacrity there came another change. Jeanneton was gay and sad by turns: to-day in tears, to-morrow full of wild spirits, laughing, chattering at the humble supper table, cheeks flushed, eyes flashing. At such times she looked her handsomest, and Mère Lemoine sighed to think so much beauty was being wasted in a clear starcher's workshop.

Neither father nor mother were thoughtful enough or careful enough to read all these signs and tokens, which would have had a very clear significance for wise and loving parents. Neither of them ever thought of following Jeanneton to her work, or asking any questions of Madame Rebèque. There had been no complaints; therefore it might be supposed the girl did her duty. She left home at the same hour every morning; and if she had taken to being much later at night, it was because there was overtime work to be done, for which she was paid liberally, in proof of which there were the four or five francs she handed her mother at the end of the week.

One bright spring morning Jeanneton left the rue Sombreuil at the usual hour, carrying all her wardrobe neatly packed in a large red cotton handkerchief. Neither father nor mother were astir, to see her depart, and it was late in the forenoon that Mere Lemoine, by no means a notable housewife, went into the darksome closet where the girl slept, to give a stroke of the broom, and discovered a little bit of a note pinned on to the patch-work counterpane:—

‘I am going away with the man of my choice for good fortune or evil. Don’t fret about me, poor old mother. I should have died at that odious

laundry business if it had not been for my René. I shall come back some day, perhaps, a lady, in a bonnet and an Indian shawl, and then you and the father will be pleased with me. If ever my René is rich I will send you money. God bless and keep you, poor little mother! René is a follower of a person called Voltaire, and says there is no God, and that we are all fools to believe in justice and mercy up in the skies, where there are only the stars and millions of miles of empty space. But I like to think there is Someone up there above all those dear little stars. Adieu, and forgive your poor Jeanneton.'

The damsel's parents were as furious as if they had guarded and treasured this one daughter as the apple of their eye. Not Shylock himself stormed and chafed worse at the elopement of Jessica, albeit she carried off good store of ducats to her lover, than Père Lemoine at Jeanneton's evanishment. He rushed off to Madame Rebèque, half stupefied and wholly savage with strong drink, to demand of her what she had done with his daughter.

The laundress treated his angry interrogations with the high hand.

'My faith, what do I know of your daughter? She is no affair of mine. It was for you and her mother to see that she conducted herself wisely,

Name of a name! she has been troublesome enough for the last three months; coming to her work late—always wanting to leave early, for some excuse or other.’

‘Leave early!’ echoed Père Lemoine. ‘Why she has been working till ten o’clock at night, she told us. She brought us the money she was paid for overtime.’

‘I pay for overtime! What a farce!’ cried the laundress. ‘If she has brought you money, it was for no overtime with me.’

There was no more to be got out of Madame Rebèque, who did not want to say all she knew, lest the matter should be made troublesome to herself in any way. One more apprentice gone to the bad made no difference to her. It was the way that half of them went. What would you have?

Father Lemoine went out of the clear-starcher’s shop, sobered, quieted, crestfallen. La Rebèque’s black eyes and fiery-apple cheeks, grenadier bust and shoulders, bare arms set fiercely akimbo, had been too much for him. He went slowly along the shabby little street, and, halfway down, encountered a band of noisy students, long-haired, sallow, lank, with Byronic collars and short pipes, issuing out of the Pantagruel, where they had been eating their midday breakfast merrily.

Lemoine turned and followed them as they strolled off towards the Luxembourg. These were the wolves his poor lamb had met every day, and among such as these her seducer was doubtless to be met. 'René'—he was not likely to forget that name. He did not know that it was a name just then made popular by a famous poet, and therefore likely to be chosen as an *alias* by aspiring youth.

The students had to pass Madame Rebèque's window, with its smart muslin curtains, and hyacinths in dark-blue glasses. A couple of them stopped in front of the window, and peered inside.

'Take care that the Rebèque does not see you looking after her chickens,' said a third. 'She is the kind of woman to throw a bowl of dirty water over you, if she caught you peeping. You would not be the first to be so baptised.'

'I was looking for that pretty *pâlotte*, that little *gentille Jeanneton*,' said the other.

'Lost time, my friend. The *pâlotte* has no eyes for any of us,' said the other. 'She is devoted to that unknown with the black moustachios, who breakfasts twice a week at the Pantagruel.'

'The Prince René. Ah, I know the gentleman. A regular lion of the boulevard du Temple.'

They passed on, merrily, with much fooling as they went. Père Lemoine turned upon his heel. It seemed to him that these students had told him all they had to tell. They admired his daughter, as one of the belles of Madame Rebèque's establishment; but Jeanneton's lover was not one of them.

He felt in his trousers-pocket, and found a franc and a few sous, quite enough to warrant his entrance into a café restaurant such as the Pantagruel. He went in and took his seat in a dark little corner, where a blouse of dubious cleanliness would not offend the eye of customers of a superior class, notwithstanding which laudable delicacy the waiter looked askance at Monsieur Lemoine's unshaven chin and greasy blue raiment.

He ordered a bouillon and a fine champagne, otherwise best cognac. The tables were all deserted after the breakfast hour; and he had the place to himself, which was exactly what he wanted. The waiter brought him his soup and the brandy bottle. He helped himself in a leisurely way, and then filled a second glass.

'Let us chat a little,' he said, pointing to the glass, which the waiter accepted with a gracious bow. The lady of the counter had gone to some obscure den in the background to eat her own

breakfast, and there was no one to object to the waiter's hobnobbing with this very dubious-looking customer. The big sandy cat, a well-known character, was prowling in a forest of table legs, picking up a savoury morsel here and there, and rubbing herself against one of the legs, as if in a vague expression of gratitude to the universe in general.

'There is a gentleman who breakfasts here sometimes, the Prince René—a gentleman with a dark moustache?'

'Connu,' answered the man, sipping the bright yellow spirit. 'I have the honour to wait upon him.'

'Do you know who and what he is?'

'There are wiser than I who would be glad to know that,' answered the waiter, shrugging his shoulders. 'He is not a student, and he is not a mechanic. He is pretty free with his money, whatever he is. Some take him for an author or a poet—one of the new romantic school, which was *joliment* hissed the other day at the Théâtre Français; others say he is a nobleman in disguise. There was one who hinted that he is a thief, like Mandrin or Cartouche.'

'That man spoke the truth whoever he was!' cried Père Lemoine savagely. 'He is a thief, this

villain, for he has stolen my only daughter—as good a girl as ever lived—the staff and comfort of my life;’ and here the *ébéniste* broke into a passion of sobs, burying his head in his folded arms upon the table of the Pantagruel.

He went back to his hole in the rue Sombreuil at nightfall, steeped in fiery liquor, having idled away the afternoon among the lowest *brasseries* in the Quartier Latin. But he made no further effort to discover the true character of the person known as Prince René, or the fate of his only daughter.

CHAPTER VII.

‘THE CROWN OF OLD MEN.’

THREE years and more had gone by since Jean-neton's elopement, and it was August—season at which Paris is at its worst, and in which sultry period the rue Sombreuil was a place to be avoided as carefully as the Jews' quarter in Rome or Frankfort. A heavy stagnant atmosphere of heat brooded over the Place de la Bastille and the faubourg St. Antoine, and hung like a ragged veil upon the cemetery yonder, and the wild crags and precipices of the stone quarries by the *buttes Chaumont*. The crowded population of the big house which the Lemoines inhabited existed as best they might upon the scanty allowance of fresh air which found its way into their rooms from the deep well on which their windows looked, or came down into the yard below for coolness. The very flowers which here and there decorated a window-sill languished in their earthen pots. The very scarlet-runners drooped upon their strings. Only the foul smells

flourished and fattened in this sickly suffocating August heat. An odour of stale cabbage and sour dish-water was in the very air men breathed. People talked of last year’s awful visitation of cholera, and predicted a return of the scourge, gloating ghoul-like over the picture of greater horrors to come, a more terrible cup of affliction to be drunk than the death-chalice of the year gone by. There had been a long drought, which promised well for the cornfields and the vineyards, but which was felt as an actual scourge in the crowded neighbourhoods of Paris—no welcome rain to wash the gutters, to flush the primitive sewers of that period, to cool the hot pavements, and splash with refreshing sound upon the stony roads. All was fiery and dry, as if Paris had been one huge furnace.

Father Lemoine carried his cabinet work into the yard, and worked just outside his den, using the window-sill as a shelf for his tools. The children came and stood about him as he worked, and made their remarks upon the mysteries of his craft—his glue-pot, his chizels, his gouges, and fine little nails. But the work stood still a good many hours of every day, sometimes for days together, with a piece of old sacking over it, while Père Lemoine amused himself at ‘The Faithful Pig,’ reading the news,

playing dominoes, talking politics, grumbling against the new king and his ministers. Paris had naturally expected the millennium after the glorious days of July ; and the reign of the elected monarch had as yet fallen some way short of the Parisian idea of a millennium. The old faubourg of St.-Antoine, populous as an ant-hill, was the seething hot-bed of revolutionary feeling ; and men who drank in those historic wine-shops were more drunken with strong words than with strong wine. Lemoine, the *trolleur*, was an ardent politician in these days, a member of the society of the Rights of Man, and full of undisciplined eloquence about his own right to work as little and to drink as much as he liked.

Mère Lemoine was not always at home in this sultry weather. Her husband's earnings had been a diminishing quantity during the last year or so, not because he worked worse or was worse paid for his work, but because he worked less than of yore. Drunken habits were beginning to exercise their usual effect. He was idle and irregular in his life, worked with fury for a couple of days, and then left off for three, or worked like a demon for a morning, and spent the whole afternoon out of doors. Mère Lemoine found that she must do something for her own part to swell the family budget, or else go very often without *fricot* or a morsel of meat

in the *pot-au-feu*. She had been educated in all the arts of fine laundry work, and to that kind of work she naturally returned. She went to Madame Rebèque, and engaged herself to that person as ironer for four days a week: the other two days would be quite sufficient to devote to the *ménage* in the rue Sombreuil, which already left much to be desired in the way of purity, and fell far short of a Dutch interior in neatness and polish.

At Madame Rebèque's the bereft mother heard various details of her daughter's lapse from good ways. How *la pâlotte*, as she was called in the laundry, had first been seen walking with a tall man in a frock-coat in the gardens of the Luxembourg; how she had been observed to wear a blue bead necklace and a pair of real gold earrings; and how she had been seen at a later period driving with the same man—a handsome man, with a thick black moustache—in a *forty sous* (hired carriage); how she was known to have gone to dances at the Pré Catalan; how she had told Herminie, that stout girl in the blue cotton frock, that her lover was a nobleman's son, and that she had no cause to be ashamed of him. His family lived at a château near Nîmes, and he was to take her to live there with them. She was to live like a lady, learn to play the piano, and she was

to wear silk gowns with *gigot* sleeves. All this Mère Lemoine heard from the workwomen. Madame Rebèque still pretended to have had no hint of her apprentice's danger.

'Who knows if the poor child was not telling the truth all the time? She may be living as a lady in a grand château, and her husband may have made her promise to hold no communication with her parents,' said Mère Lemoine, who would fain have induced the laundry to look at the sunny side of the picture.

The laundresses laughed aloud over their ironing-board.

'They all tell the same story, these fine gentlemen,' said one—'a stern father, a grand château, the family name, impossible to make a marriage of inclination until the father dies, and then she will be mistress of the château and *tout le tremblement*. And most likely your fine gentleman is only a clerk at ninety francs a month, or a student in law or medicine, with a father keeping a shop somewhere in the provinces. It is only fools who believe such stories; but the *pâlotte* was a born innocent—always moping by herself, or crying in corners, never taking kindly to her work or to our company. Such a girl is an easy prey for a scoundrel.'

No one was able to tell Mère Lemoine anything more about the Prince René than that he was tall and good-looking, with a black moustache and a military walk. He had not been seen in the quarter since Jeanneton's elopement.

And now it was more than three years since the girl's flight, and not a line had come from her to tell whether she was still among the living.

'She is dead, I hope,' said Jacques Lemoine, brutally; but the mother still kept a tender corner in her heart for the girl, to whom she had not been over-kind when they two were together.

It was the end of August, and the evening air was heavy with an impending thunderstorm. There had been many thunderstorms during that month of sultry weather, and the leaden-hued skies seemed charged with electricity. To-night, as Mère Lemoine walked home from her laundry, there was that terrible stillness which comes before the warring of the heavens. Lights were burning dimly in some of the windows of the Sombreuil barrack; but the général impression of the courtyard, as Mère Lemoine went in through the archway, was one of cavernous darkness.

Her own room was darker still, and she had to grope upon the chimneypiece for matches and

a tinder-box. While she was fumbling about among dirty brass candlesticks and saucepan lids, something stirred upon the hearth and startled her violently—something which she touched with her foot presently, while her trembling hands struck a light. What was it—a dog, or something human?

It was very human. A white face looked up at her, passive, ghastly in the blue light of the sulphur match.

‘Mother!’ came like a cry of pain from pale quivering lips.

‘Mon Dieu!’ cried the mother, falling on her knees beside that crouching figure, while the match fell and expired upon the cold hearth by which the wanderer squatted. ‘My child Jeanneton, and alive!’

‘Not very long to live, mother, or I should not be here to-night,’ the hollow voice answered.

It was not Jeanneton’s old voice. Something told Mère Lemoine that it was the voice of one whose life was fading, just as the match had flickered out upon the hearth a moment before.

“No, no, *fillette*; don’t say that. Suppose there has been trouble—let that pass. Our hearts are not stone: we know how to forgive. Wait while I

strike another match. You are tired and faint. There is a drop of wine in the cupboard, I dare say, and that will revive you.'

The tinder-box flashed again ; another match was struck, and the candle lighted. The mother set it on the table, and then turned to look at her daughter, who still crouched on the hearth, with her head and shoulders resting against the side of the chimney-piece.'

Alas ! what a change was there ! *La pâlotte*, as they had called her at the laundry, had been once of a lily-like fairness. She had now a yellow tint, as of a face moulded out of wax. Her cheeks were hollow, her lips had a purple tinge ; her eyes had that awful lustre which tells of lung disease ; her shrunken hands were almost transparent, and the shoulders—the poor bent shoulders—and hollow chest indicated the extremity of weakness.

'*Pauvrette*,' sobbed the mother, lifting this vanishing creature in her arms, on her lap, as when she was a child of ten or eleven. Alas ! as light a burden now as in those earlier days. 'My pet, what has befallen you ?'

'Only misery, mother ; the fate that befalls every woman who puts her trust in an idler. No, I will not speak evil of him. It was Destiny more than he that was unkind. If the

world were more just, men more merciful to each other, my life would have been different.'

'Tell me everything, *chérie*; fear not your poor old mother. The father will be home presently, and we will tell him any story you will; but have no secrets from me.'

'I will not, mother,' she answered faintly. 'Oh, how good you are! I thought you would thrust me out of doors—spurn me with your foot when you found me on your hearth. I will tell you by-and-by—everything—but not yet.'

The dry lips faltered, as if the speaker was going to faint; then Mère Lemoine placed the girl in an old arm-chair—a Voltaire—which the *ébéniste* occupied in his hours of leisure. She rushed to the cupboard and brought out a bottle with a remnant of wine left from last night's supper—another bottle in a secret corner on the shelf above held a few spoonfuls of brandy. She mixed the two in a tumbler, and gave it to her daughter, who drank greedily.

'My mouth was parched,' she murmured, putting down the glass with her tremulous hand, while her mother brought out some fragments of *charcuterie*—the remains of an *assiette assortie* purchased for the morning's breakfast—odd pieces of pork and sausage. Mère Lemoine put these on

the table, with knife and fork and plate, and a loaf of bread.

‘I have walked a long way since daybreak,’ faltered Jeanneton. ‘The roads were hot and dusty—my feet burnt like fire. It was like walking on red-hot iron.’

‘Where have you come from?’

‘Toulon,’ answered the girl.

‘Toulon! What took you to Toulon?’

‘Fate! Don’t ask me anything to-night mother. Let me have one night’s rest under a roof—in a bed. I have not slept in one for nearly a month.’

‘My poor child! And the château near Nîmes, and the rich father?’

‘What! you heard of that?’

‘Yes, I am at work with La Rebèque. Your father does not earn so much as of old; one must help a little.’

‘Poor mother! Yes, the château, the noble father, the silk gowns, and carriages, and piano: the life that I was to lead far away. All lies, mother; lies which only a baby or an idiot would believe. But that is past and gone. Mother, I have come to bring you trouble.’

‘Never mind the trouble. Eat something, my pet; try to eat.’

Jeanneton made an attempt, but those savoury morsels of pork had no flavour for her dry lips. The wine had comforted her—she drained the glass—but she had no appetite—her throat seemed thick and swollen—she could with difficulty swallow two or three mouthfuls of bread.

‘I am not hungry, mother ; I think I have got out of the way of eating. Come, let me show you something.’

She rose with an agitated air, took up the candle, and led the way to that narrow closet of a chamber, in which she had slept as a girl—the room where she left the letter pinned on her coverlet on the morning of her flight.

Jeanneton leant over the bed and held the candle, shading the light with her too transparent hand. A child of two years’ old, with a shock of curly flaxen hair, was sleeping placidly on the tattered patchwork counterpane, wrapped in a ragged shawl.

‘Yours?’ said the mother, and not another word.

‘Mine,’ answered the daughter. ‘Will you take care of her, and bring her up as your own when I am gone?’

‘Oh, but you are not going to die,’ remonstrated Mère Lemoine, kneeling down to caress the child. ‘With a bed to sleep in and good food, you will soon get strong again and recover your pretty looks.’

And—who knows?—you may find a kind husband yet who will provide a good home for you and this *gamine* here.’

‘Don’t talk nonsense, mother. You know, and I know, that I am dying. I have known as much for the last three months. It has been a slow death; but the end is coming. Promise me not to send this little one to the Enfants Trouvés. I could not rest in my grave if I thought she was to be sent there.’

‘Never, my Jeanneton : I swear it.’

‘God bless you, mother, for that promise.’

‘Perhaps her father may come to claim her some day,’ suggested Mère Lemoine, dying with curiosity about her daughter’s past, now that she was recovering from the shock of the meeting.

‘Never. He has other business in life than to claim his child. She must be your own, mother—yours only. And you will take care of her—watch her better than you watched me—you will be wise by experience,’ said Jeanneton with a hysterical sob.

She seemed half-sinking with fatigue ; she had walked fifteen miles under the burning August sky, on the sun-baked roads, carrying her child the greater part of the way, obliged to stop to rest every half-hour or so by the roadside, in shade or sunlight. Her mother undressed her, taking off the dusty

raiment, which was tidier than might have been expected under the circumstances, and supplying a ragged old petticoat and camisole of her own for night-gear. And then Jeanneton sank wearily down upon the bed beside her baby girl, the bed upon which she had slept lightly enough in days gone by.

Oh, how sweet it is to be in a bed !' she murmured ; 'and yet all my bones ache.'

She was asleep in a few minutes, the child's head nestling against her bony shoulder, her wasted arm ; but her breathing was laboured, and she started every now and then in her sleep with a murmur of pain.

Happily this was one of Père Lemoine's late nights. It was twelve o'clock when he came in from 'The Faithful Pig,' and he was too far gone to be told of Jeanneton's return. That must wait till next morning.

When morning came poor Jeanneton was in no condition to plead her own cause with an offended father upon earth. Only the heavenly Father of us all could understand the language which those dry lips babbled to-day in the delirium of high fever. The glassy eyes gazed upon Mère Lemoine and knew her not : they seemed to see things and people far away.

The *trolleur*, in a sombre mood after last night's

revelry, inclined to see life under the blackest hue, was grimly pitiful of his daughter's dying state, and did not urge that she should be flung out of doors. But he spoke of her, even in her sickness, with undisguised bitterness. This is what such creatures bring upon themselves when they forsake a good home and a loving father and mother to follow a villain. He was furious at the idea that his wife had sworn to rear the child—not to send her to the Enfants Trouvés, the only natural home for such *canaille*.

'To the hospital she shall go,' he said, 'before we are many hours older. *Cré nom!* is it not enough to have reared one viper? Would you let another of the same brood warm itself in our bosoms to sting us by-and-by, when we are old and feeble?—and this one has a villain's blood in her veins. From Toulon she came, you say, that trash yonder? No doubt she has left her René there in the prison. That would be his natural end. To the hospital with that base-born brat! I shall take her there myself after dark.'

His wife began to cry. What was she that such shame and misery should befall her? she demanded. An honest working woman, able to earn her *pâtée* as well as ever her husband earned his. *She* worked four days in the week, while he

worked scarcely three, and half his earnings were spent at 'The Faithful Pig.' Suppose she chose to bring up her dying daughter's child? She had a right to spend the few pence the child's maintenance would cost out of her wages at the laundry. And by-and-by, when she was old, the grand-daughter would be a help to her. She defied her husband, and bade him take the little one to the Foundling Hospital at his peril. If he did she would make the faubourg ring with the story of his cruelty. She stormed with such vehemence that Jacques Lemoine was fain to sneak out of the house, and repair to a little restaurant in the rue de la Roquette, famous for its *pieds de mouton roulette* at seven sous, and its Bordeaux at twelve sous the litre.

When he was gone Mère Lemoine borrowed a pinch of *tilleul* from a neighbour and brewed a *tisane* for her sick daughter, which powerful remedy had, strange to say, no effect on the galloping pulse or dry hard skin. The grandmother washed and dressed the child, and let her toddle about the living-room, and even into the yard. She was a pretty little thing, as like what the mother was in her girlhood as the bud is like the flower, yet with a more exquisite delicacy of feature, pale, and with large blue eyes. She had a sorrowful look, as if the dreamy, half-unconscious

first years of life had brought her few childish joys ; yet betimes the little face broke into smiles, and the wide blue eyes laughed merrily, as children's eyes do laugh, at the wonderland of childish fancies and dreams. She could talk a little, after her baby fashion, and toddle about the yard, pointing to rays of sunlight flickering on the wall, and crying, 'Pretty, pretty,' enraptured with a kitten which graciously suffered the caress of her soft little arms.

In the afternoon, the *tisane* having proved ineffectual, Mère Lemoine called one of her gossips in to look at her daughter. The gossip opined that the poor young woman was in a desperate way, and recommended Madame Lemoine to fetch an apothecary whom she knew of in a street hard by. The apothecary was out when Mère Lemoine went in search of him, and it was not until nightfall that he came to look at Jean-neton. He knelt down beside the pallet, felt the sufferer's pulse, looked at the large dim eyes, so bright yesterday, so dull to-day.

'I can do nothing,' he said. 'She is sinking fast. You had better go for a priest at once. You should have called me sooner.'

Mère Lemoine, in self-justification, told the circumstances of her daughter's home-coming.

‘Poor thing! To walk fifteen miles in her state was simple suicide. It could only be wonderful energy of mind which enabled her to accomplish it. Her case must have been hopeless a month ago—galloping consumption.

Père Lemoine had been so disturbed by his wife’s vehemence that work was naturally impossible, and it was the usual midnight hour when he came home, not drunk, but *allumé*, as he and his friends called it.

He roared out an angry greeting as he crossed the threshold and saw his wife sitting up for him, with the baby-girl asleep on her knees; but Mère Lemoine pointed to the door of the little bed-chamber where her daughter lay.

‘Did you not see the taper burning in the window as you came across the yard?’ she said. ‘Could you not guess?’

‘Dead?’ he faltered hoarsely.

‘Dead! She was sensible just at the last, after the priest had been praying over her, and she asked for you. ‘Kiss him for me,’ she said with her last gasping breath, ‘and tell him to forgive.’

The father opened the door softly, and looked in at that poor clay; marble white in the faint light of the consecrated taper. There was some holy water in a saucer on the rush chair beside the bed, and a

little spray of box. Lemoine knelt beside the corpse, dipped the spray in the holy water, and made the sign of the cross on that ice-cold brow. It was years since he had made that holy sign—not since his mother’s death. A husky sob broke from his labouring chest, his heart beating heavily with the sense of a new pain; remorse; the sense of eternal bereavement.

‘He went back to the living-room, and sat down opposite his wife without a word. She leant across and took his hand with a tenderness which was a thing of the past between them, and laid that horny hand upon the child’s satin-soft brow.

‘Swear that you will not send this nameless orphan to the hospital!’ she said. ‘Swear!’

‘I swear it,’ he answered, bending down to kiss the baby-face. He had not had courage to kiss that marble brow yonder, though he had longed to do it.

And so a young life began to grow and bud and bloom in that dingy dwelling-place, amid foul odours which grew fouler with the passing years; within the sound of loud tongues which changed one slang for another, and one form of blasphemy for another, as time went by, but which never ceased to offend earth and heaven. The child’s life was

not one of sunshine in that shady place. For the first years—while the memory of the mother's early death was still fresh, a softening influence upon the minds of Père and Mère Lemoine, while the fairy-like loveliness and beguiling ways of childhood made the granddaughter a kind of plaything—the little one was treated with indulgence, was kissed and fondled, fed on the best morsel out of the dish, allowed to occupy the warmest corner of the hearth, and had the softest pillow for her golden head. The child was completely happy in those days, knew not that there was any fairer place on earth than the rue Sombreuil, loved the murky old house—passing old after forty years' occupation, the cosy hearth, the narrow little room in which her mother had died, the neighbour's children, her playmates. She was a bright, joyous little creature in her childhood, but always slim and delicate in form, and of a snow-drop fairness. She had been baptised Jeannette, but her grandfather called her Pâquerette, his Easter daisy, on account of her pale cheeks, blanched in that stony well where her life was spent. She came very soon to be called Pâquerette by every one. As she grew to girlhood it was the only name she knew.

When she was seven years old she was sensible enough to be trusted upon an errand, handy enough

to dust the room and sweep the hearth. By the time she was nine she had learned to be very useful ; and then a change came o'er the spirit of her dream, and the pains and penalties of life among the poor began in real earnest for this little pale child called Pâquerette. Once accustomed to make her useful, the grandparents very soon began to treat her as a drudge, and to lose their temper with her at the slightest provocation. Any little mistake in an errand, any neglect of an order from her elders, brought upon her the harshest treatment ; nay, errors that were none of hers brought punishment upon her guiltless head. If the grocer gave her a quarter of a pound of bad coffee, or the woman at the *crémèrie* supplied a pat of rank butter, it was Pâquerette who suffered. She should not be such an imbecile as to take whatever those thieves chose to foist upon her. She had a nose, had she not, to smell butter so rancid that one could have detected it a street off ? Was she to be a fool all her life ?—for example.

Sorrows there were many in that orphan girlhood ; joys there were none. Aged by anxieties, Pâquerette at eleven cared no longer for the play of the common troop of children who made one band in the big house. It was no longer a delight to her to play hide-and-seek on the winding-stone

stair and the long narrow passages, with noisy boys and girls—to race about the yard dragging an old stew-pan or a wooden shoe for a cart, or to play at being the *postillon de Longjumeau*, with four small boys for her team. She had taken upon herself all the cares of life at twelve years of age, and had bidden farewell to childhood and its fancies, its sweet imaginary joys, its cheap blisses, in which a dirty common stair can do duty for a mountain-pass, the embrasure of a door for a feudal castle, a saucepan-lid for the shield of Bayard or Achilles, an old broken chair for a royal carriage, and a broomstick for a prancing thoroughbred.

Nothing moved Pâquerette now except music, and for that she had ever a greedy ear. Let a brown-faced Savoyard stray into the yard and grind a waltz upon his Barbary organ, and Pâquerette would throw aside her broom, or leave her tub of dish-water, and go waltzing round the dirty courtyard on the points of her slim young feet—light as any fawn in the glades of St. Germain or Fontainebleau. But even such a joy as this was of the rarest: Paris was not rich in barrel-organs in those days, and the grinders knew that the rue Sombreuil was not likely to give them a plenteous harvest.

It never occurred to Père or Mère Lemoine that the sordid monotonous existence which was good enough for them was hardly suitable for the dawn of life; that this pale flower which they had sworn to rear was languishing and fading in their charge. In sober truth, Pâquerette would have been far better off at the hospital for nameless children than she was in that ground-floor den in the rue Sombreuil. State charity would have lodged her better, clad her better, taught her better, provided her with more recreation, and in every way been a better parent to her than these of her own flesh and blood, who let her wallow in ignorance, shutting her off alike from all knowledge of the glorious beauty of earth and from all hope in the infinite joys of heaven.

And thus, a drudge and a scapegoat for two elderly people with whom the world did not go over well, and who grew a little less amiable with the passing of the years, Pâquerette endured the monotony of a joyless existence till she was seventeen. Very child in ignorance of all good, very woman in knowledge of evil.

CHAPTER VIII.

‘SHE STRETCHETH OUT HER HAND TO THE POOR.’

It was Sunday, and all the world of the faubourg St.-Antoine was drifting towards that wider world outside the walls of Paris, where there were fields and gardens, parks and woods, and where the river seemed to take a new colour as it flowed between verdant banks, under the shadow of spreading willows. Everybody was holiday-making, except that one little family in the murky ground-floor, looking into the pent-up yard—everybody else in the world was happy and idle and gay, as it seemed to Pâquerette; but for her Sunday made no difference. Neither the *trolleur* nor his wife ever went to church, or put on Sunday clothes, or went holiday-making in the afternoon, like their neighbours. They had no Sunday clothes; nor had Pâquerette. The *trolleur*'s only notion of a holiday was to go earlier than usual to ‘The Faithful Pig,’ and to stay later, and drink more. His wife sat at home, and hugged her misery, and drank secretly.

So that when Père Lemoine came home from his noisy revelries, steeped in vitriol, but as firm on his legs as a granite pillar, he found the wife in a silent and stony condition, which might mean a dignified sullenness, and which the *trolleur* never troubled himself to interrogate. It was enough for him that there were no wearisome remonstrances—that no vessels of hot or cold water were ever flung at his head, as was the fashion in some domiciles he knew of under that very roof; that he was allowed to roll into his wretched straw bed, and court slumber in peace. If any one had questioned him about his wife, he would have replied that she was one of the soberest of women—only a little given to sulks when he stayed out after midnight.

Pâquerette knew better, or knew worse about her grandmother. She had been sent too often to replenish Mère Lemoine’s brandy-bottle, at a little wine-shop in the close and foetid alley round the corner—the wretched lane where the waste from the dyer’s workshop made pools of crimson water that lay like blood-stains in the muddy hollows, beside a gutter half-choked with refuse cabbage-leaves, egg-shells, and an occasional dead cat. In this unholy place, at a dark little den, down a couple of steps, Pâquerette was a familiar visitor. The *patron* filled her bottle without waiting for her

to ask for what she wanted. Sometimes she had the money ready to hand him, sometimes she had to ask for indulgence till the next time, and the *patron* was fierce and expressed himself harshly. Once she had trembled at that wolfish ferocity of his—the deep harsh voice and strong language; but custom hardened her, and she came to understand that those terrible oaths, that bass thunder, only meant that she must not go there too often without the money in her hand.

It was Sunday, a brilliant morning in the middle of May, and Pâquerette sat on a broken-down wooden stool in the yard, just beside the door of that room which was workshop, kitchen, and living-room all in one, for the *trolleur's* family. It was between ten and eleven o'clock. The bells of Notre Dame were ringing, and Père Lemoine and his wife were still asleep in the den at the back of the sitting-room. They always slept later on Sunday mornings. That was the one difference by which they honoured the Sabbath. Pâquerette had been to fetch a loaf from the shop on the other side of the street, and had brought from the cupboard the remains of an *arlequin* bought overnight in the market-place, a curious assortment of broken victuals, the refuse of the fashionable restaurants, piled together artistically, a lottery of comestibles in which a lucky

venturer might gain half a truffled pheasant, or the tail of a fine lobster—a hodge-podge of good things, where fish and flesh, confectionery and vegetables jostled each other. Pâquerette looked longingly at the wall of a *vol-au-vent* half full of chocolate cream, as she set out the table for her elders, but she did not presume to begin her breakfast without them. She had made the coffee, which was simmering in a *chauffrette*, and now she was sitting listlessly in the yard, looking up at the blue bright sky, as out of a well, hardly hoping to see more of its beauty than she could see thus, sitting at her door, pent in by walls which were as the walls of a prison. Had not her whole life been spent in a prison, hemmed round and shut in by poverty, ignorance, neglect, cruelty, helplessness? The girls in prisons and reformatories are better cared for than ever Pâquerette had been.

She sat gazing up at the sky. Sometimes her eyes fell lower, and she looked at the many windows staring down at her from the four sides of that stone well, like so many eyes. Each window was alive, as it were, and had its peculiar significance. The tall dilapidated old house teemed with human life. At some windows clothes were hanging out to dry; at some—these only the few among the many—there were flowers. Here and there hung a bird-cage.

Those windows were the cleanest which had birds or flowers, and Pâquerette fancied life must be sweeter and more peaceful in the room that was shaded with yonder box of wallflowers, dark-green leaves, and blossoms of gold and crimson. Some windows were screened by a bright-coloured curtain, across another hung a limp and dirty rag, which hinted at a filthy interior. Children were hanging out of some windows, women were looking out of others. Before one a man was shaving himself in an airy costume of shirt and braces. At another a girl was peeling potatoes. Fragments of song, fragments of speech, fell into the silence of the yard below; and from an open window high up came a gush of melody, the serenade from 'Don Pasquale' whistled divinely by a young house-painter who lived under the tiles. Pâquerette knew hardly any one to speak to in the thickly peopled barrack. There were some who were old inhabitants like the Lemoines, who had squatted down in their one or two rooms, among their poor scraps of secondhand furniture, or their heirlooms brought from some far-away country village a quarter of a century ago, and had been content to grow old with the house, which was rotting visibly, no one spending any money upon its repair. Others came and went, and were like the shifting figures in a kaleidoscope, alike, and

yet not the same. Pâquerette was too shy to make friends. There were merry girls in some of the rooms—girls who worked hard all day, yet were full of talk and laughter when they came home in the evening. Two, three, sometimes four, lived together in a small apartment—sisters, cousins, friends.

There were a pair of sisters who lived behind that window with the wallflowers, and who shared their room with a cousin older than themselves. This little *ménage* Pâquerette had observed with peculiar interest. The three girls seemed so happy. They had such an air of perfect contentment in their work and their lives, their simple pleasures and humble home. She saw them go out in the morning when she was doing her housework, before grandmother or grandfather had emerged from the inner den yonder. She saw them go to mass in the early morning, she saw them run in again for a hurried breakfast, and then off to work. The two sisters worked for a third-rate dressmaker in the Marais; the cousin worked in a bedding warehouse in the rue Ste. Honoré, and spent all her days in stabbing mattresses with a big needle. They were always neatly clad. On Sundays they looked like young ladies, and, if the weather were fine, they always went out in the afternoon with their friends, coming home after dark under masculine escort, but

in a sober respectable fashion that gave no ground for scandal.

On some rare occasions, gratefully remembered by Pâquerette, these girls had stopped to speak to her as they passed by. Pauline, the youngest and merriest, had asked her why the old people never took her out, at Christmas time and the new year, for instance, when the boulevards were well worth going to see. One need not have any money to spend. Only to look at the stalls of toys and jewellery, and the lights and the people, was an evening's pleasure. Pâquerette shook her head sadly. The grandfather and grandmother would not walk so far. They had seen all that, and it was worth nothing; the same thing year after year, they said.

'Ah, but you have never seen,' cried Pauline. 'Can old people forget that they have ever been young? Besides, it is not the same every year. There are always new toys, new trinkets, new bonbons, new words, new jokes. No new year is quite the same as last year. And if it were, there is time to forget between whiles. Lights and music and happy faces are always fresh. You shall go with us next Christmas.'

Pâquerette gave a sigh of rapture.

'Oh, I should so like!' she said; 'but you would be ashamed of me in my old clothes.'

‘But your clothes cannot always be old,’ answered Pauline, with her bright laugh. ‘You can save your next new gown for Christmas.’

Pâquerette crimsoned, and hung her head, but said never a word. The truth was that she had never had a new gown in her life. Mère Lemoine had amicable relations with a snuffy old woman in the Temple, who dealt in second-hand clothes, and it was from the very refuse, the offal of this old hag’s stock-in-trade, that Pâquerette’s wardrobe was occasionally replenished. The two old women drank their litre of little-blue or their measure of three-six together, and over their cups debated the price of those few rags which Madame Druge, the dealer, flung together in a dirty heap upon the floor. Pâquerette wore anything — a wine-stained velvet jacket, the nap crushed and the edges frayed, a garment that had grown old before its time, like its first owner, now riding in a carriage, anon rolling in the gutter, the cast-off livery of vice—or a cotton skirt that had grown thin in the wear-and-tear of honest labour. Pâquerette had neither voice nor choice in the matter.

‘Why do you never mend your clothes, child?’ asked the eldest of the three girls one day, a tall, stout young woman, who was called big Lisbeth—a broad-shouldered, strong-minded, outspoken damsel

of eight-and-twenty, the soul of honesty and good-nature. She gave Pâquerette a little friendly tap upon the cheek. 'My child, why are you always in rags?' she asked reproachfully; and then Pâquerette owned with tears that she had no needles and thread, and that she had never been taught to sew. This state of things was too horrible. Big Lisbeth took the girl straight to her apartment, the room with the wallflowers in the window, a room with two beds in alcoves, shaded by white muslin curtains, everything neat and clean as the palm of your hand. Pâquerette looked about her, dazzled by the prettiness of the room. It was the first decent or orderly room she had ever entered. She could not imagine that a duchess would have anything better. The mahogany chest of drawers, shining with polish, the white jug and basin, the bunch of flowers in a glass vase on the mantelpiece, the portraits of Louis-Philippe and Marie Amélie neatly nailed against the white-washed wall, and between them a coloured print of the Holy Family, with a white and gilt china *bénitier* just below it. On a shelf by the fireplace there were white cups and saucers—ah, how clean!—and an old copper coffee-pot which shone like a jewel. As compared with that wretched kennel on the ground-floor, this room was as the Heavenly

Jerusalem with its jasper walls and gates of pearl compared with the foulest city on earth.

Lisbeth took out her needle-case and gave Pâquerette her first lesson in sewing. The girl was very awkward. Her fingers were unacquainted with the use of a needle, and the cotton skirt was like tinder—the stuff broke away from the needle. But Lisbeth was very patient, and the long slit which had attracted her attention in the yard below got cobbled together somehow, while Pâquerette acquired some rudimentary ideas as to the use of a needle and thread. Lisbeth made her a present of half a dozen needles, an old brass thimble, and a reel of cotton—the first gift of any kind which the girl had ever received from any one outside her own family. She promised that she would use the needles, and mend her clothes always in future. The thimble was a difficulty. She doubted if she should ever accustom herself to the use of that curious instrument; but she promised to try.

'Why do you wear a velvet jacket and a cotton skirt?' asked Lisbeth, bluntly. 'That does not go well together. Besides, velvet for working-people! It is scarcely respectable?'

Pâquerette hung her head. It was a small pretty-shaped head, like a rosebud on its stalk,

and had a trick of drooping when Pâquerette was troubled or confused.

‘Grandmother buys them,’ she faltered.

‘Grandmother is an old fool,’ exclaimed Lisbeth, angrily.

She was indignant with that old *trolleur* and his wife for bringing up their grandchild so vilely. They taught her nothing. She sat in the sun half the day, rolling her thumbs and looking up at the sky. She had grown up as a pagan in a Christian city, with the bells of Notre Dame ringing within earshot. She could do nothing useful for herself, or for other people, except cook and clean up a little, in her poor untaught way, for that wretched old man and his wife. She was a regular Cinderella; and there are no good fairies nowadays to come to Cinderella’s relief.

Pâquerette had never heard the story of Cinderella, or she might have thought of her to-day as she sat gazing idly up at the sky, while all the world was going forth to its pleasure. She had no hope of going any further than the yard, or of seeing any more of the sky than she saw now. Her hands hung listlessly at her sides; her head leant wearily against the dirty stone wall behind her. She was slipshod, slovenly, with her hair rolled up in a loose knot that seemed too big for her head.

She was sitting thus, hopeless, idle, unfriended, when the three young women—the demoiselles Benoit—came back from mass. This picture of forlorn girlhood struck them all three at once.

‘That poor child! Just look at her! I should like to massacre those wicked old people,’ muttered Lisbeth, who always used strong language.

‘She looks the picture of misery,’ said Toinette, with a compassionate sigh.

‘If we could only do anything to cheer her a little,’ murmured Pauline.

After all, the race of good fairies is not quite extinct. They are human, the good fairies of the present, and their power is limited. They cannot turn a melon into a Lord Mayor’s coach, or a lizard into a prize footman; but there is much that can be done, if people will only do it, with the wand called charity. The good Samaritan, who went out of his way and took some trouble to help his fellow-creature, is a grander ideal than Cinderella’s fairy, who had the command of all Wonderland, and never took any trouble at all.

‘What a fine day, Pâquerette! Are not your old people going to take you out this afternoon?’

The girl shook her head.

‘They never go into the country, and grand-

mother never goes out till after dark,' she said piteously.

'What foolish people! We are all going to Vincennes for a picnic. Have you ever been there?'

'I have never been anywhere,' said Pâquerette, with a reproachful air.

There was a kind of cruelty in asking her such a question. Surely they must know that she was never taken out for her pleasure.

'And you have never been to a picnic?' asked Pauline.

Pâquerette answered dumbly, only by a shake of her head. The tears came into her eyes. Why did they tease her by such silly questions? Why could they not take their pleasure and let her alone?

The three girls lingered in the yard a few paces from Pâquerette, putting their heads together and whispering.

'We could lend her a gown and a cap,' said Pauline.

'It would not cost much to take her. Ten sous for the omnibus there and back. There is enough in the basket for all.'

'If Madame Morice would not mind,' speculated Toinette.

‘Why should Maman Morice mind? The girl is well-behaved: she will interfere with nobody.’

A little more whispering; and then Pauline, the youngest of these three lowly graces—she who had been the first to speak to Pâquerette—went over to the lonely child, and said:

‘Would you like to go to Vincennes with us this afternoon? We’ll take you, if your people will let you go. I can lend you a gown. We are pretty much of a size, I think.’

Pâquerette started up from her rickety little stool, crimson with wonder.

‘You don’t mean it!’ she cried, clasping her hands. ‘Oh, you couldn’t be so kind!’

‘Nonsense, child, it is no great matter,’ answered Lisbeth, in her frank loud voice. ‘We shall be very glad to have you with us, poor little thing. Run and speak to your old people; there is no time to be lost; and then come up to our room. You know the way.’

‘Oh yes, mademoiselle. I have not forgotten your goodness in teaching me to sew.’

The three girls went indoors, while Pâquerette ran into the den where her grandfather was taking his coffee at the table near the fireplace, in his morning dress of shirt, trousers, and slippers. He looked as if he had not washed or combed his

hair for a week; but he was only saving himself up for a swimming-bath by the Pont Neuf, an indulgence which he generally gave himself on a Sunday afternoon. He was not quite so bad as he seemed.

He lolled at ease in the dilapidated old Voltaire, his naked feet half out of his tattered old slippers, and reposing on a chair opposite. He sipped his coffee, and gazed dreamily at his work—a *bonheur-du-jour* in amboyna wood, richly inlaid—a work of art. The *charabia* was to come for it to-morrow morning, and take it about to the dealers till he got Père Lemoine his price, out of which Monsieur Charabia naturally took a handsome commission. There were about half a dozen hours' work still wanted for those finishing touches which would make the little bureau perfect, and that labour would most likely be put off till the very last. Père Lemoine would dawdle away his Sabbath in luxurious idleness, and stroll homeward after midnight, *très bon-zig*, to snatch two or three hours' feverish sleep, and then up and to work at earliest dawn, by the light of a tallow candle, so as to be ready for the Auvergnat.

The coffee was good, the *arlequin* suggested a *déjeuner* at the Rocher de Cancale, and the grandfather was amiably disposed to poor little Cinderella.

‘Come and have your breakfast, child,’ he said. ‘I began to think you had taken the key of the fields.’

‘I shouldn’t know where to look for the fields if I had the key,’ she answered; and then she came round to the back of the old man’s chair, and leant over him. ‘Grandfather, the demoiselles Benoît have asked me to go to Vincennes with them—this afternoon—directly. May I go?’

The old man shrugged his shoulders, and gave a long whistle, expressive of surprise. He knew of the three girls on the fourth floor, and that they were very respectable young persons. He wondered that they should take any notice of such a ragamuffin as his granddaughter.

‘Will it cost any money?’ he asked, cautiously; ‘for if it will you can’t go. The bag is empty—not a sous till the *charabia* gets me a price for my bureau yonder.’

‘They did not say anything about money. They offered to take me to a picnic, that was all; and Mademoiselle Pauline will lend me one of her gowns.’

‘One of her gowns! What a duchess! If I had two coats one of them would be always *au clou* [with the pawnbroker]. Well, you can go, child. If those girls are simple enough to pay

for you, I see no objection to your having a day's pleasure. Your pocket will be empty, so there is no chance of your being swindled by any of your co-operative dodges; or else the word picnic has a sound I don't like. It means handing round a plate after dinner, and for every man to pay his scot.'

'*Bon jour, père,*' cried Pâquerette.

She did not give the *trolleur* time to change his mind. She ran across the yard to the steep black staircase upon which the Benoît apartment opened; a terrible staircase in truth, an air-shaft for all insalubrious odours, a dark well whose greasy walls were thick with the grime of half a century, an atmosphere of infection, rank, sour, musty, tainted with every variety of foulness, animal, vegetable, mineral.

Pâquerette was inured to such odours. She took hold of the greasy rope which hung against the slimy wall, and served as banister-rail, and ran lightly up the corkscrew stair, hustled by, or hustling, three or four blouses and one frock coat who were hurrying down, eager to be off and away for their day's amusement. The door on the fourth landing was open, and the demoiselles Benoît were waiting for her.

'Come, Pâquerette, we want to catch the one

o'clock omnibus,' cried big Lisbeth; and then the door was shut, and the three girls began their *protégée's* toilet.

They meant to do the thing thoroughly, having once taken it in hand. Lisbeth was one of the most thorough-going young women in Paris, a workwomen such as there are few, and everything she did was done well and earnestly. She had trained the two young cousins in the same spirit. In the midst of poverty, surrounded by dirt, slovenliness, drunkenness, and all evil habits, they had kept their lives pure and clean; and the place they inhabited was an oasis of purity in the murky old house.

All three girls stood for a minute or two looking at Pâquerette, as if she had been a work of art. Was she pretty? They hardly knew; but they knew that she might be made to look *gentille*. There was an air of elegance in the slim fragile figure, the swan-like throat, the slight droop of the head, which the Benoît damsels, substantially built, felt rather than understood. But of that order of beauty which was appreciated in the faubourg St. Antoine Pâquerette had not a trace. The sparkling eyes, the *beauté du diable*, fresh complexion, girlish plumpness, were not here. There was rather a look of sickliness, a waxen pallor,

and an attenuation which, from a conventional point of view, was fatal to beauty.

Instructed by her friends, Pâquerette plunged her head and shoulders into a shallow wooden tub, and made such use of soap and water as she had never done before, emerging flushed and breathless from this novel ordeal, to scrub herself vigorously with a large huckaback towel, a very coarse, common towel, but, oh ! how delightfully clean. The flavour of cleanliness, the fresh odours of abundant soap and water, were new things in Pâquerette's experience.

'Sit down, child, and let me do your hair,' said Lisbeth, with bluff authority.

'Oh ! mademoiselle,' murmured the girl, overcome with shame at the thought of her unkempt locks.

Happily she had a habit of dipping her head in the wretched cracked little basin every morning when she washed her face, for coolness sake, so the rough head was fairly clean. What a mass of soft brown hair fell about the child's shoulders when Lisbeth had drawn out two rusty spikes of hair-pins—a soft palish brown, not auburn or golden or chestnut—a shadowy veil of fine soft hair which fell round the thin wan face like an evening cloud.

While Lisbeth brushed and combed the long thick mass of hair, Pauline and Toinette consulted in a corner as to the gown they would lend the orphan, and finally decided on a white cotton with little pink spots, clean and fresh from the ironing board. Girls who are good starchers and ironers, and are not afraid of the public laundry, can afford to wear clean clothes. The hairdressing was finished by this time, the soft brown tresses were brushed back from the forehead, and rolled into a large knot at the back of the small head; and now Pâquerette, casting the slough of her poverty, put on a petticoat of Toinette's and over it Pauline's pink-spotted cotton.

Pauline had prided herself on her small waist until to-day, but her gown was ever so much too big for Pâquerette. It had to be taken off, and the bodice taken in nearly three inches with a few vigorous stiches on each side of the waist; and then the gown was put on again and finished off with a neat linen collar. A dainty little muslin cap was pinned on the smooth brown hair, and Pâquerette, who had submitted very patiently to be turned and twisted about like a doll in the process of dressing, was to be rewarded by the sight of her transformed image in the

little looking-glass. Not until the final touch was given to the picture would the three girls allow so much as a peep at the glass. But now, when the last pin had been adjusted, Pauline brought the glass and held it before Pâquerette's astonished eyes.

What did she see there? What kind of image greeted her curious gaze? A grisette? A grisette only as for cotton frock and white cap. That shy, slender, fragile, ethereal creature had nothing else of the grisette. The type was patrician. That kind of face marked the vanishing point of an aristocratic line—a race dying out, attenuated, but lovely in its decay.

This was beauty assuredly, but the beauty of a white woodland flower, frail, faint; the brief bloom and glory of a day. The soft grey eyes—dark, pensive—the small Greek nose, and delicate chin, with that receding slope which means weakness of character, the pallid complexion, just relieved by the blush-rose tint of the lips and the pencilling of the eyebrows,—all these made up a kind of beauty, but not a type to strike the vulgar eye. Pâquerette was just good-looking enough to pass in a crowd, as the vulgar say, and just the kind of girl to be passed unmarked and unadmired by the crowd. Yet the demoiselles

Benoît felt that there was a charm in that pale face and slender form—a charm which was better than vulgar beauty.

‘What do you think of yourself now, Pâquerette?’ asked Pauline.

But the girl would not express any opinion on this point. She had only words of gratitude for the three good fairies.

CHAPTER IX.

‘AS SNOW IN SUMMER.’

THE Benoit girls and their *protégée* set out for the omnibus office, talking, laughing, intensely happy. Pâquerette had never ridden in an omnibus till to-day. Cinderella could not have been more delighted with her enchanted coach than this waif of St. Antoine with the heavy red omnibus which jolted and rattled over the stones of the shabby boulevard. There is not much beauty in the road from the Place de la Bastille to Vincennes; but to Pâquerette it was rapture to feel the movement of the carriage, and to see the happy-looking people in their Sunday clothes—the children, the mothers, the working men; the noise and bustle and ferment of a fine warm Sunday, the first Sunday of summer, when all the world was at its best, and when all the ants in the ant-hill of St. Antoine had come out of dark holes and corners to bask in the sun.

As they were jolted along, Pauline told

Pâquerette what they were going to do. They were to meet their friends at the Fort—Monsieur and Madame Morice—old friends who had known the departed Monsieur Benoît, and Gustave his brother, Lisbeth's father, in years gone by, when they all lived in a little bourg in Normandy, about twenty miles from the fine old city of Rouen. Madame Morice had succeeded to a small inheritance left her by a bachelor uncle, a well-to-do blacksmith; and with this modest fortune she and her husband had come to Paris and had set up a small grocery shop at Ménilmontant. The rents were so high in all the good quarters of Paris that they had been constrained to establish themselves in a district which left much to be desired. But these Morices were exceptional people. They brought the temperate and industrious habits of the province to Paris, and did not allow themselves to be corrupted by the great city. Their little shop at Ménilmontant flourished exceedingly. The two rooms behind the shop were the pink of neatness, and their one child, a boy of seven, was a model of obedience and good manners. Surrounded by so much that was foul and evil, they had contrived to keep themselves untainted by the infection of vice. They were the only intimate friends the Benoît girls could reckon upon in Paris; but for

acquaintance—the come-and-go society of Sundays and holidays—the Benoîts had all Madame Morice's circle, which consisted of the most respectable citizens of her quarter.

The Morices were sauntering up and down with half a dozen friends in front of the Fort when the four girls arrived. There was Mademoiselle Gilberte, the dressmaker, a stylish young person of five-and-thirty; and there was Madame Beck the clear-starcher, a matron whose purity of attire spoke well for her laundry-work; also Madame Beck's son, a flaxen youth of nineteen, with not a word to say for himself, and with an embarrassing habit of blushing violently and goggling his eyes if he were looked at. There were Monsieur and Madame Callonge, from the smart little *boucherie* opposite Madame Morice's shop; and lastly, there was a tall, broad-shouldered, and very handsome Monsieur whom the Benoit girls had never seen till to-day.

He wore a blue blouse and a workman's cap; but one could see at a glance that his outer garments were spotless, and that his linen, as indicated by the white collar and wristbands, was that of a gentleman. Morice and Beck were both in broad-cloth and stove-pipe hats, and Morice had gone so far as to encase his fingers in a pair of stiff yellow leather gloves; and yet this man in the

blue blouse looked more like a gentleman than either of them. His movements had an ease, his head was carried with a lofty grace, which those others had not. He was strolling by Madame Morice's side, silent and thoughtful, as the four girls approached.

There was much cordiality in the greeting given to the Benoît girls by all the company, except the man in blue, who was evidently a stranger. Lisbeth presented Pâquerette to Madame Morice as a little neighbour she had brought with her, and that was all the introduction needed. The grocer's wife smiled at her with a comfortable protecting air, and murmured to Lisbeth that the child was *très gentille*, and then the gentlemen of the company took the baskets, and they all strolled off to find the prettiest part of the wood. It was a gay and busy world through which they went, a world of humble pleasure-seekers, somewhat loud in their mirth, but passing merry. There were wedding-parties among the crowd, couples who had been wedded on Saturday in order to secure Sunday for a second day of revelry. There were circles seated on the grass at their picnic breakfast; youths and lasses playing hide and seek or blind-man's buff among the stunted bushes, in an atmosphere of dust and sunshine. Blue blouses, crimson trousers, white

bridal gowns made a vivid variety of colour against the turf, which looked green in the distance, although it was rusty and trodden almost to extinction by the multitude of feet. Yonder glanced blue water, under the bright spring sky. Pâquerette thought the whole scene bewilderingly beautiful.

While they were walking in quest of a retired glade Madame Morice, who was a great gossip, told big Lisbeth about the stranger in the blue blouse. He was from Brittany, a stone-mason, engaged on the fortifications yonder, and he had lately moved into an apartment on the top front floor above her shop. He was a very superior person—sober, saving, and almost a gentleman in his ways. He sat up late at night studying sometimes. She had seen his lamp from the road when she and her husband came home from a theatre; but let him study never so late, he was always off to his work in the early morning. She had heard that he was a staunch Republican, and had grand ideas about the equal rights of man. She had made his acquaintance through her little boy Adolphe, who had been nearly run over, when this good fellow, Ishmael, picked him up from under the very feet of a pair of waggon-horses.

‘Can you wonder that I have liked him ever

since?’ she said. ‘Morice cultivates his society for the sake of his conversation—they are of the same way of thinking, and neither of them trusts too securely in the Prince President, or this new law which the Chamber passed the other day.’

Lisbeth was no Republican. She had liked and admired the Citizen King and his family—that pious charitable queen, those princesses, fond of sculpture and poetry, needle-work, and all pure feminine arts. The revolution of ’48 had seemed to Lisbeth an unmitigated calamity, and the people who made it were devils in her eyes. She admired Prince Louis Napoleon for the sake of those glorious traditions which are as fairy tales to the children of France. She knew her Béranger, and in the songs of the national poet had learned the history of the Empire that was gone. If those people who prophesied the coming of a new Empire were right, so much the better. Anything was better than a Republic, which seemed a colourless, hopeless kind of Government; a Chamber always at logger-heads; a flock without a shepherd.

Madame Morice and her party found a little glade, a somewhat secluded spot, in which to picnic, and as everybody seemed pretty sharp set by five o’clock, they all sat down at that hour to open the baskets and arrange the meal. The gentlemen of

the party provided the wine, and some *limonade gazeuse* had been brought by the thoughtful Morice for those ladies who might not care for such strong drinks as *macon* or *ordinaire*. It was a very sober party, but very cheerful notwithstanding, with much talk and laughter; and the paucity of accommodation in the way of knives and forks, plates and glasses, gave occasion to many small jokes of an ancient and innocent character. Thus big Lisbeth and the stone-mason, on sharing their meal off a common plate, were called the *ménage* Ishmael, and various insinuations of a matrimonial kind were levelled at them, all which Lisbeth bore with strong-minded placidity. But when Pâquerette presently sipped a little wine out of the stone-mason's glass, the first jesting remark made the pale face flush crimson.

'She is so shy, *la pauvrete*,' said Pauline to Madame Morice. 'A word frightens her.'

'She is rather pretty,' said Madame; 'and she has the air of a demoiselle.'

'You would not have said that if you had seen her this morning before we took her in hand,' replied Pauline, with a natural pride in her work.

Before they had finished dinner a gray-haired old organ-player came and perched himself near them, and began to drone out his old airs—'The

Carnival of Venice,' '*La ci darem*,' '*Non più mesta*,' and a waltz or two. The waltz tunes inspired the little party. Why should not one have a dance?—just for digestion. A word and the thing was done. The plates were thrust into the empty baskets; every one was on foot; partners were chosen: Pâquerette found herself, she hardly knew how, gliding round in a circle, supported by the strong arm of Monsieur Ishmael. The shy youth with eyes *à fleur de tête* summoned courage to invite Pauline.

The copper-faced, weather-beaten old organ-player ground on, a villainous music, but with a swing and a rhythm which guided the feet of the dancers, and seemed to them in the inspiration of the moment—summer air, blue sky, youth, hope, and freshness—as the music of the spheres. It was in their own pulses, in their own young hearts, the melody was sounding; the rhythmical drone of the organ was only the outer husk of that inner and spiritual melody, the mere mechanical beat which kept time with the music of newly awakening hopes and loves.

Pâquerette had never learned to dance; but in these light, slim slips of girlhood dwells the very spirit of motion. Like an Æolian harp which has hung in the stillness of a closed

chamber, silent for years, but, let a summer wind breathe on the strings, and the music comes; so with Pâquerette! At the sound of the Savoyard's organ, with the sense of a strong arm encircling her waist, her feet slid lightly over the dry close turf, and every movement of that slender figure and those little feet was supple, graceful, harmonious, as in a dancer of highest artistic training. There are some arts that come by instinct to certain people, and Pâquerette was a born dancer.

'Hurrah!' cried the middle-aged lookers-on, applauding the three couples, but with their eyes on Ishmael and his partner; and 'Hurrah!' echoed Ishmael, drawing his partner a little closer to his breast, light-hearted, elated, he scarce knew why.

The other two couples stopped breathless and panting, and stood aloof out of the little circle of sunburnt greensward; but Ishmael and his partner waltzed on, unconscious that they were alone, unconscious of spectators, feeling like two birds with outspread wings hovering in a world of light and air, steeped in blue sky and sunshine, far above this common earth.

When they at last came to a stop the girl's head dropped upon her partner's shoulder in a sudden giddiness. It seemed to her as if they had swooped down from that blue, bright world,

and that it was the shock of touching the earth again which made her senses reel and her sight grow dim.

She recovered herself almost immediately, and released herself from Ishmael's supporting arm.

'Thank you,' she said naively. 'How delicious dancing is!'

'And how exquisitely you dance!' answered Ishmael, looking at her with eyes which seemed to her to glow and dazzle like the sun-rays that meet on a burning glass.

'Please do not laugh at me, monsieur; I never danced with any one in my life until to-day. I have danced by myself in the yard sometimes when there was an organ, but of course that is different.'

'I am very glad of that,' said Ishmael.

'Glad of what?'

'That I am the first partner you ever danced with. That makes a beginning in life, does it not?—a kind of landmark. And now shall we go for a little walk? You are breathless still. We must not dance any more just yet.'

He offered his arm, through which she slipped her little ungloved hand, after an instant or so of hesitation. She had never taken any man's arm before. Miranda in her desert island could hardly have been more innocent of the manners and ways

of the outer world. Ishmael looked down at her wonderingly, admiringly. He had seen many more beautiful women since he had lived in Paris: the women at the theatres, for instance—dazzling, gorgeous creatures, with eyes that flashed liquid light, complexions of ivory or alabaster. He had seen aristocratic loveliness go by him in carriages—patrician beauty innocent of the actress's art; for in those days ladies of rank had not taken to rouge and enamel. This slender thing, stealing a little upward glance at him now and then, tremulously, was splendid neither in form nor colour. Yet there was an aristocratic refinement in the almost too delicate features—the little nose, so finely chiselled, yet undecided between the Greek and the *retroussé*, the small round chin sloping somewhat weakly at the base, and the pure half-tints of the pale complexion, the violet blue of the large dreamy eyes, with their long auburn lashes and pencilled brows. No Joan of Arc or Agnes Sorel type of woman this: but rather of the Louise de la Vallière mould—a woman to sin, her heart being tempter, and to be sorry for her sin for ever after.

‘Pâquerette,’ murmured Ishmael thoughtfully, perceiving the relation between the white spring flower and this pale fragile prettiness; ‘were you christened Pâquerette!’

‘I don’t know,’ she answered childishly; ‘I don’t remember.’

‘Of course not,’ he said, smiling at her simplicity: ‘one does not usually remember one’s baptism. But have you no other name?’

‘Not that I know of. My grandfather once said that he called me Pâquerette because I was such a poor white little thing when he first took care of me.’

‘And you have neither father nor mother living?’

‘Neither,’ sighed Pâquerette.

‘Can you remember your parents, or did they both die while you were a baby?’

He was not questioning her out of idle curiosity, or with the idea of making conversation, while they strolled by the shabby, dusty trees, in the people’s much-trampled wood. He wanted to get nearer to this pale flowerlike creature; to know how this delicate spray could have shot forth from the rugged tree of hard-working humanity.

‘I never saw either father or mother,’ the girl answered sadly. ‘I used to think till a year ago that my grandfather and his wife were my father and mother, only a good deal older than other girls’ fathers and mothers. And then some one in the house—the old tinman on the fifth floor,

who lived there before I was born—told me that my mother died while she was young. She was very pretty, he said. He remembered her when she was smaller and younger than I am now. I asked him why she died so young, but he did not know. She went away, and then she came back with me, and then she died, and was buried among the poor people at Père Lachaise. There is no cross to tell where she lies. I have gone there sometimes on a Sunday afternoon, and walked about over the long grass under which she is lying with so many others, all nameless. And after a few years the great common grave will be opened again, and more coffins will be put in till it is full—the dead lying above and below each other in crowds, just as the living are crowded story above story, in the big houses like ours.'

'It is hard,' said Ishmael, setting his teeth, for to this staunch Republican all inequalities of rank and wealth seemed hard, 'but it will not always be so. The living and the dead will have their rights by-and-by. The hewers of wood and drawers of water will not always be flung into a common grave. I remember hearing something of a new law made last winter, which was to secure decent burial for the poor. And so you live with your grandfather and grandmother, Mademoiselle

Pâquerette,' he went on. 'I suppose they are very fond of you?'

He fancied that the love of an old couple for an orphan grandchild must be something over and above the common love of parents, tenderer, more blindly indulgent.

'They are not always unkind,' Pâquerette answered innocently.

'Not always. Are they ever unkind to you?'

'Sometimes. They are very poor. Grandfather works very hard—now and then. He makes beautiful things — bureaux or escritaires for the furniture-dealers. But he cannot always sell what he has made for a good price; and then he gets unhappy, and very angry with grandmother and me. And they both have to take a good deal of wine and brandy for their rheumatism: and when one is old that gets into one's head, and one does not know what one says or does.'

'I hope you never take wine or brandy, Mademoiselle Pâquerette,' Ishmael said earnestly.

'They never give me any—they have none to spare,' the girl answered with childlike simplicity; 'and I hate the smell of the stuff. I have to fetch it for grandmother from the wine-shop.'

'I hope you will always hate it,' said Ishmael. 'Strong drink is the curse of great cities. In

Brittany nobody gets drunk ; we drink only cider. But there we are always in the fresh air—our brains are not dulled by the stifling atmosphere of small crowded rooms,' he continued, recalling that crowded wine-shop near his lodging where the men heated themselves and maddened themselves, as they sat in the oven-like room, under the low blackened ceiling, drinking their coarse spirit and smoking their rank tobacco, and holding forth to one another with an eloquence that was ranker and coarser than potato brandy or cabbage-leaf tobacco, could Ishmael but have understood it aright.

He had to explain to Pâquerette where Brittany was, and what kind of a place. Her ignorance upon all possible subjects was of the densest. The whole world outside the faubourg St.-Antoine and Père Lachaise was a blank to her. The faubourg was her only idea of town, the cemetery her sole notion of country. She listened to Ishmael's description of his native province with eyes that grew wider and wider with wonderment. The sea, what was it like ? And rocks, what were those ? Hills, valleys, orchards, windmills, river, willow-shaded, flocks of turkeys, processions of geese, broad sketches of yellow sand : everything had to be explained to her. Ishmael grew eloquent

as he went on, full of enthusiasm for that dear land which he had left; not for lack of love on his part, but because parental love was lacking there for him. He told Pâquerette all about the village of Pen Hoël and its surroundings, and his own wild, free life there: but he never mentioned the name of the place, or the château, or uttered a word which could indicate that he had been anything higher than a peasant in his native place. His past life was a profound secret, which he had no intention of revealing to any one. His youth and its belongings were dead and buried, and he stood alone—a young Cæsar who had just passed life's Rubicon, and had taken up arms against fate.

By-and-by came more dancing, while the sun went down in a sky of crimson and gold behind a meagre avenue of shabby limes, their spring foliage already tarnished with the dust of the city, and while umber shadows stole across the scattered patches of scrubby wood and copse. The old Savoyard had sent his dog round among the company with a hat in his mouth, and had been so satisfied with the result that he was smiling over his barrel-organ, and grinding away with renewed energy, while his faithful mongrel sat beside him, wagging a poor stump of a tail, the more ornamental half

of which had been demolished piece by piece in various fights with other mongrels.

Again Pâquerette and Ishmael waltzed together, to the old-fashioned 'Duc de Reichstadt' waltz, which enjoyed a revival of popularity just now on the organs of Paris, as a delicate compliment to him who called the dead boy cousin. Again the fair small head reclined against the stone-mason's stalwart shoulder, and the strong arm sustained the girl's slim figure, so that her little feet seemed to skim rather than to tread the dusty turf. They were dancing still when Pâquerette's friends began to urge the prudence of turning their faces homewards. Spring days may be ever so delicious, but spring evenings are always chilly. A cold wind was creeping up from the unseen river, the last gleam of gold and red had faded in the west. The world was a misty gray world, under silvery stars, that were just beginning to glitter in a cold gray sky. The baskets had been packed with empty plates and glasses; the empty bottles—*alias* negroes—given as a perquisite to the old Savoyard. The day of rest and pleasure was over. Throughout the wood little parties of holiday folk were tramping homeward—fathers carrying sleepy children on their shoulders, mothers dragging babies in little chaise carts; lovers with arms

wreathed round maidenly waists; here and there the red legs of a soldier striding towards the barrack; everywhere departure; save where silent and stealthy in the darkness of copse or grassy hollow some homeless wretch watched the departing multitude, hopeful of being able to pass a quiet night under the stars, unassailed by the authorities of the city.

Ishmael stopped reluctantly when the organ-grinder ground his last bar. He had danced many a waltz in the least disreputable dancing places of the workmen's quarter: but never had he felt the very inspiration of the dance as he had felt it to-day, on the disadvantageous turf, under the open sky. The *bastringues* yonder, even the best of them, reeked with odours of cheap wine and brandy, and a vile decoction of wine and spices known as *sang de bœuf*. Their very atmosphere was poisoned by bad company and evil language. Ishmael had always left such places disgusted with himself for having been induced to enter them. But to-day he had felt himself in respectable company; he had heard not one foul word. He felt that he would like to see more of his little partner of to-day, of those three candid-looking, decent girls, her companions.

'Your little friend dances exquisitely,' he said

to big Lisbeth. 'I think you must have taught her.'

'Not I, indeed,' answered Lisbeth, laughing at his implied compliment, so evidently meant to conciliate. 'She has taught herself, poor little thing, skimming about the yard, like a bird or a butterfly. The only joy she has had in life, I believe, has been to dance to the sound of an organ, when one has chanced to come our way, which has not been often.'

'She seems to have had a very unhappy childhood, poor little thing!' said Ishmael, walking beside Lisbeth, as they made their way towards the point at which the party was to disperse. He had no intention of leaving the four girls at that point, but meant to offer them his escort to their home.

'The old *trolleur* and his wife are an ogre and ogress,' answered Lisbeth, indignantly. 'Figure to yourself, then, monsieur, this is the first day's pleasure that poor thing has ever known; and if it were not for my cousin lending her a gown—but I ought not to speak of such things; only when one is angry——'

'You are right to feel angry. Poor child, poor child!'

So even the neat pink cotton frock, the modest

muslin cap, were borrowed plumage. Poor little Cinderella! Hitherto Ishmael had believed his own unloved childhood to be altogether exceptional—a kind of martyrdom unknown before in the story of mankind. And here was this fragile girl, ever so much unhappier, steeped to the lips in squalid poverty, the drudge of a drunken old man and woman. The very thought of Fate's injustice towards this weakling made his blood boil. He looked down at the girl pityingly, tenderly almost, as he walked by her side along the dusty road. So pale, so delicate, wan and wasted even, in the very springtime of life! The bud had not unfolded into the blossom, and yet it was already faded. Such a faint snowdrop prettiness! He had admired women before to-night, had dreamed more than one dream of the passing moment; but he had never before been deeply interested in a woman's character or a woman's fate. And Pâquerette interested him both ways. He wanted to know what kind of girl she was: he wanted to know all that could be known of her sad story.

'Let me see you home, mademoiselle,' he said to Lisbeth, in whom he recognised the head of the Benoît family.

'Monsieur is very good. We thought of returning by the omnibus.'

‘On such a lovely spring night? The omnibuses will be crowded to suffocation. It will be an affair of waiting till midnight for places. Don’t you think it would be much pleasanter to walk home?’

‘It is a long way,’ said Lisbeth, pleased at the idea of saving so many sous; ‘but if the others are not too tired——’

‘Not at all,’ protested Toinette. ‘The night air is so fresh, I could walk to Asnières or Bougival.’

‘But Pâquerette, she has danced so much, she must be very tired,’ said Pauline.

‘Tired! Oh no, not in the least,’ cried Pâquerette. ‘It will be delicious to walk home; although the omnibus was heavenly,’ she added, gratefully remembering her first drive.

So they all set out along the dusty road, which was less arid now under the cool softness of night. Pâquerette found herself hanging upon Ishmael’s arm, somehow, just as in their first dance she had seemed to glide unconsciously into his arms. He had taken the little hand in his and slipped it through his arm, with an air of mastery which implied protection, friendship, shelter, the guardianship of the strong over the weak.

He asked Pâquerette no questions about herself or her life, as they walked back to the faubourg St. Antoine. After the story he had heard briefly

from Lisbeth Benoît, he felt that it would be almost cruelty to touch upon the poor child's surroundings. He wanted to know more of her story; he was moved and interested as he had never been till now; but he felt that he must make his discoveries for himself, not from those delicate lips, with their tint of pale rosebuds.

He spoke of himself, or rather of his province, which was another part of himself, the orchards and fields and winding river, the sea and rocks of that land where the borders of Normandy and Brittany almost touch across the narrow boundary of the Couësnon. He told her of that land of legends; of fairies, and of poulpicains, the impish husbands of fairies; of Druid monuments and haunted fountains; of Christian miracles and pagan shrines; told her of that good King Gradlon, of Cornuailles, who is to the Bréton as King Arthur to the Cornishman. Never had Pâquerette been so interested. Her eager questions led the speaker on. Fairies; what were they? She had never heard of them. The sea? Ah, yes, she had heard often of the sea, and she longed to know what it was like—how big, what colour, and did it really roar in stormy weather, as her grandfather had told her, as if with the might of ten thousand lions; and did the waves really, really, rise

mountains high, glistening walls of white water ; and were there silvery shining lights upon the waves, which looked like enchantment, and only meant rotten fish ? She longed of all things to behold the sea, and the country, and the vineyards and mountains which the *charabia* had told her about when he sat smoking his pipe with her grandfather.

Ishmael inquired who this *charabia* was of whom she spoke as a familiar friend.

The *charabia* was grandfather's friend, Pâquerette told him. It was he who took away a piece of furniture when grandfather had finished it, and carried it round to the dealers. Sometimes he got a very good price, and then he stayed to supper, and there was a *fricot*, and grandmother made a *saladier* of wine à la Française afterwards, and then the *charabia* grew merry and talked of his native Auvergne. There were bad times when nobody would give a fair price for the furniture ; and then when there was hardly bread to eat the *charabia* came forward and bought grandfather's work himself, rather than that they should all starve. Grandfather was a *trolleur*—a man who worked on his own account, and sold his work to the dealers.

'The *charabia* must be a very benevolent

person, or a rank thief,’ said Ishmael. ‘He is altogether a new character to me. What kind of a man is he?’

‘Stout, broad-shouldered, with a dark face, and short black hair—not a very nice-looking man,’ answered Pâquerette, simply; ‘but grandfather says he means well; except when he is angry, and then he says the *charabia* is a blood-sucker, and is growing fat upon his flesh and bones. Grandmother says the *charabia* is rich, and that we ought to make much of him.’

‘And you, Mademoiselle Pâquerette, do you like this Auvergnat?’ asked Ishmael.

Pâquerette had never been called mademoiselle until to-day. It was a kind of promotion.

‘Like him—I?’ she said, wonderingly. ‘I don’t think he cares very much whether I like or dislike him. He has hardly ever spoken to me; but he sits and stares at me sometimes with great black eyes which almost frighten me. I have to fetch the wine and brandy when he comes to supper. I hate him,’ she added, with a shudder; ‘but I mustn’t say so. You won’t tell grandfather?’

‘Not for the world, mademoiselle. I am afraid from the way you speak that these grandparents of yours are not very kind to you.’

‘They are not so kind as you,’ the girl answered softly, for there was a protecting friendliness in his tone which awakened in her a new sense of sympathy; ‘but they do not mean to be unkind. It is only because life is so hard for them.’

They were near the rue Sombreuil by this time, and in a few more minutes they entered the gloomy archway of the common lodging-house—not so large as those barracks of a hundred rooms, to be built a few years later under the Haussmann rule, but large enough to hold a good deal of misery and foulness of all kinds. The yard looked very dreary in the faint light of a moon which was just rising above the towers of Notre Dame. A guttering candle flared with a yellowish flame upon the bare old table in the *trolleur’s* room. The door was open, and Mère Lemoine was standing in the doorway gossiping with a neighbour. She wore a smart little coloured shawl over her shabby gown, and her Sunday cap, which was an interesting specimen of dirty finery. She was in that condition which her friends called *poivre*, and had the peculiar solemnity of manner which sometimes goes with that state.

‘It is that *torchon*, at last!’ she exclaimed. ‘Don’t you think you have given me enough of inquietude this evening, *p’tite gredine*, roaming

the streets after dark, you that have been brought up as carefully as a mam'selle? And now'—with a suppressed hiccough—'you come home with a strange monsieur in a blouse!'

Pâquerette and Ishmael had the start of the others by some five minutes.

'You knew I was with kind friends, grandmother,' said the girl. 'This gentleman came home with me. Mam'selle Benoît and her cousins are just behind us.'

On this Mère Lemoine curtseyed to the stranger with a dignified air, and regretted that her husband was not at home to invite him to supper; but if he would break a crust with them, he would be heartily welcome.

Ishmael, moved by curiosity about Pâquerette, or interest in Pâquerette, snapped at the invitation.

'I dined too well to be able to eat anything,' he said, 'but I should not be sorry to rest for a little while, without deranging Madame. It is nearly five miles from Vincennes, though the walk seemed a mere *bagatelle*; and I have a longish way to go to my lodgings.'

Madame Lemoine threw up her hands in wonderment. 'They had walked all the way from Vincennes! That *paresseuse* of hers, for example, who always loitered on every errand? Wonders would never cease!'

‘It was a lovely walk,’ said Pâquerette. ‘Mademoiselle Benoît asked me if I would rather go in the omnibus, and it was my own choice to walk. You are not tired, are you, monsieur?’—appealing to Ishmael. ‘I feel as if I could walk five miles more.’

‘Tired? no, mademoiselle, not absolutely tired; but I should be glad to rest for a little quarter of an hour.’

The Benoît girls were parting with the goggle-eyed youth and his sister under the archway. Pâquerette flew across to them as they came into the yard, to thank them for their goodness to her.

‘And the gown?’ she said. ‘Shall I come up to your room and change it for my own?’

‘Not to-night, child,’ answered Pauline kindly; ‘you must be tired after that long walk. I will bring down your things at six o’clock to-morrow morning, and then you can return me mine. I suppose you are always up at six?’

‘I will be up at six to-morrow morning,’ answered Pâquerette, ashamed to own the lateness of her normal hour. What was there to induce early rising in that ground-floor den, where the *trolleur* and his wife sometimes slept half through the sunny forenoon, coiled in the darkness of their hole like dogs in a kennel?

The Benoît girls kissed Pâquerette, wished Ishmael a brief good-night, and ran off to their dingy staircase. Ten o'clock was striking from the tower of Notre Dame—not a very dissipated hour, albeit Mère Lemoine pretended to be shocked at the lateness of her granddaughter's return.

Ishmael was invited to walk into the living-room, and to seat himself in the *trolleur's* greasy old Voltaire, an heirloom which had grown dirtier and more rickety year by year during Pâquerette's progress from baby to girl, but which was still regarded as the acme of comfort. The stranger looked round the room wonderingly. There was not one feature to redeem the all-pervading dreariness; even the fine old walnut-wood *armoire*, tall, capacious, a relic of old-world industry and comfort, had been degraded from its sober antique beauty by neglect and hard usage. The brass lock and hinges had fallen into disrepair; the heavy door yawned ajar, revealing a heterogeneous collection of old clothes, crockery, boots, hardware, and empty wine bottles. Nothing in the room suggested neat or careful habits in the occupants. In one corner the cabinet-maker's bench stood above a heap of shavings which must have been accumulating for weeks; in

another a basket of tools had been flung down anyhow among dirty plates and saucepans. A greasy pack of cards on the table beside the battered brass candlestick showed how Mère Lemoine and her gossip had been amusing themselves.

Not a primrose or a spray of wall-flower from the flower-market; not one sign of womanly niceness, of the household fairy's care, in all the room. Ishmael sighed as he glanced at Pâquerette, who stood shyly beside the smoky hearth, straight, slim, fragile-looking in her white and pink raiment.

‘Poor child,’ he said to himself, ‘she looks sweet and innocent as a spring flower in the woods at Pen-Hoël; but what honest man would ever dare to marry a girl from such a home as this?’

While Ishmael sat beside the hearth, replying to the grandmother's polite interrogatories, Père Lemoine came in, unexpectedly early, unexpectedly sober. He had not been to ‘The Faithful Pig,’ but to a political meeting of *ébénistes* in a wine-shop in the rue de la Roquette, where they assembled secretly in a back room, and in fear of the police, all such meetings at this time being illegal. Although he had taken his glass or two he was in a perfectly respectable condition, full

of the meeting, and of the importance of the syndicate of cabinet-makers, of which he was only an outsider.

'But they know that I can speak,' he said proudly, 'those scoundrels of the Left. I am not good enough to be one of their syndicate, a poor devil who lives from hand to mouth, works as the whim seizes him, as all true artists have always worked, from Palissy downwards. They let me speak, for they know I am not without eloquence. They have called me sometimes their old Danton—the mouth of thunder—the lion-headed one. There is again a talk of a *coup d'état*. He—Prince Louis Bonaparte—has sworn that there is no such thing in his thoughts; but the *ébénistes* neither trust him nor the Chamber—and the *ébénistes* are a power in Paris. Let the Elysée and the Chamber look to it. The pulses of the national heart beat here—the life-blood of France ebbs and flows here!'

'Monsieur, here, is no friend to the President,' said Mère Lemoine, 'he is a man after your own heart.'

'Pardon, Madame,' answered Ishmael, 'I have been in Paris only half a year. I reserve my opinion. If Louis Bonaparte means well to the people, I am with him heart and hand. But I wait to know more

of the Prince President and his policy. He has dealt fairly with France so far, and this rumour of an impending *coup d'état* may be groundless. It was talked of nearly a year ago, and has not come yet.'

'The time has not come—the necessity has not come,' said Lemoine, fresh from the secret discussion at the wine shop. 'Wait till the sands are running out in the glass; wait till that man's day of power is waning; and then see what he will do to keep the sceptre in his hand. Remember the Consulate and the Empire. Remember the 18th *Brumaire*. We shall see the same game played over again by an inferior player. Louis Bonaparte has the army at his back. It was said to-night, by one who knows, that Courtigis, the general in command at Vincennes, has orders to fire upon the faubourg with the biggest of his cannon, in case of insurrection, while three regiments of cavalry are to clear the streets, and sabre every insurgent who ventures out of his hole. If necessary he is to burn every house in the faubourg. It will be a fierce struggle, friend, but I hope when the fight comes you will be found on our side.'

'I shall be on the side of liberty and right, be sure of that,' answered Ishmael.

CHAPTER X.

‘MY SOUL FAILED WHEN HE SPAKE.’

ISHMAEL saw no more of Pâquerette for nearly a month after that night in May, although he asked Madame Morice more than once during that time why she did not organise another picnic with those nice girls her friends of the faubourg St. Antoine. Madame Morice had other plans, or the Benoît girls were otherwise engaged. He might have found some excuse for calling in the rue Sombreuil had he so chosen; but he shrank with loathing from that dingy room, half workshop, half kitchen—the *trolleur* in his greasy blouse, the *trolleur’s* wife with her crafty questions, her blood-shot eyes, looks as evil as those of the fabulous witches dear to his native province. He was sorry for Pâquerette; he sympathised with the innocent, helpless creature, whose youth had been overshadowed by this ogre and ogress. But to choose a wife from such a den—he, with manly aspirations and gentle blood in his veins—no, that was not

possible. Neither was it possible for him to entertain one dishonourable wish about that childlike creature. And yet he ardently desired to see Pâquerette again ; out of curiosity, out of a purely philanthropic yearning to be of some good to so unhappy a being.

One Saturday afternoon, just before midsummer, Ishmael, coming home from work earlier than usual, heard a shrill confusion of voices in the little room behind Madame Morice's shop. The door was half open to the common passage, to admit such summer airs as might wander that way, and Madame Morice caught sight of the blouse going by.

'It is Monsieur Ishmael himself,' she cried. 'Come in, if you please, monsieur. You have been asking me about picnics for the last three weeks, and now is your opportunity. The demoiselles Benoît and I have been discussing a grand *fête* for to-morrow.'

I am with you, ladies,' answered Ishmael. 'I wish I had a big balloon and could carry you all off to Brittany by to-morrow evening. It is the feast of St. John, our greatest festival. When the sun goes down every rock and every hill begins to shine with its bonfire in honour of *Monsieur St. Jean*—a hundred fires, a thousand fires, all sparkling and gleaming in the twilight.

And then comes the joyous sound of music, and a procession of girls in their holiday clothes come to dance round the fires. She who can dance round nine bonfires before the first stroke of midnight will have a husband before the year is out. And the farmers bring their beasts to pass them through the sacred fire—sure safeguard against cattle disease for ever after. And from valley to valley sound the shepherds’ horns, calling and answering each other through the night; and beside many a fire there are placed empty chairs, that the spirits of the beloved dead may come and sit there to hear the songs and watch the dances.’

‘What a strange people you Bretons are!’ exclaimed Madame Morice.

‘We are a people who honour our ancestors and believe in their God,’ answered Ishmael gravely. ‘It seems to me sometimes that in Paris you have neither the memory of the past nor a creed in the present.’

‘We remember our revolutions,’ replied Madame Morice, whose husband was a politician; ‘they are the landmarks in our history.’

‘You were discussing a picnic,’ said Ishmael.

The three Benoît girls and Madame Morice were seated round a table furnished with dainty little white cups and saucers, a plate of delicate

biscuits, and a *chocolatière* which breathed odours of vanille. As a grocer's wife, Madame could afford to entertain her friends with such luxuries, once in a way. She handed Ishmael one of the little toy cups and saucers, which he took with the air of an elephant picking up a pin.

'Yes, we were talking of a grand excursion,' answered practical Lisbeth Benoît; 'but I am afraid it is too far, and will cost too much. We want to go to Marly-le-Roi, and spend the day in the woods, and have a picnic dinner at a restaurant in the village, where there is a nice little garden with an arbour in which one can dine. Madame Morice knows all about it. We went there on her sister's wedding-day. The people are civil, and the dinner not too expensive. But the journey there and back—that is a serious question.'

Thé three Benoît girls shook their heads gravely.

There arose a serious discussion. There was the railway fare to a certain station on the line, which only took them about half way to Marly-le-Roi, and then there was the diligence, and then the dinner. It would cost at least twelve francs a head, all told, travelling third class on the railway and in the cheapest part of the diligence, and limiting the dinner to bouillon, bouilli, salad, and dessert.

It seemed a frightful price to pay for one day's pleasure, but then what a delight it is to escape out of the dust of Paris into the real country, the grand old royal forest, the village which could not be more primitive were it a hundred miles from the metropolis! The Benoît girls had given themselves no pleasure since that day at Vincennes. They had been saving their money for some stupendous festival; and this idea of Marly, which they had seen and admired so intensely two years ago, had obtained possession of them.

Bougival—Asnières? No: they wanted the forest, the old forsaken fountains, the water-pools, the memories of a stately past.

So, after an infinitude of talk, calculation, argumentation, it was finally settled that they should all go to Marly. It was to be a small select party this time. Madame Morice's married sister and her husband, Monsieur and Madame Dulac, were to be invited to join, and would doubtless be charmed to revisit scenes associated with the tender memories of a wedding-day. But no one else was to be asked. There should be no risk of grumbling and recrimination at the costliness of the day's pleasure. And, again, a diligence will only accommodate a certain number. A large party is always difficult to manage *en voyage*.

Ishmael began to look blank.

‘Your friend Mademoiselle Pâquerette, you will take her, will you not?’ he asked, appealing to Lisbeth.

Mademoiselle Benoit sighed and shrugged her shoulders.

‘Not possible,’ she said. ‘Poor little Pâquerette would dearly love to go, I am sure; but that wicked old *trolleur* would not give her twelve francs for a day’s pleasure; though I dare say he spends twice as much every week at “The Faithful Pig.”’

‘But you might pay for her, Mademoiselle Benoit,’ said Ishmael eagerly. ‘That is to say, you might allow me to find the money, and say nothing about it to Mademoiselle Pâquerette. She is only a child; she would never ask who paid for her.’

‘She is little more than a child, I admit,’ replied the practical, outspoken Lisbeth; ‘and yet I hardly know if it is a right thing to do. You seem to admire Pâquerette very much, monsieur: I hope you mean well by her.’

‘Monsieur Ishmael means well by all the world. I will answer for that,’ interjected Madame Morice.

Ishmael reddened a little at this.

‘Believe me that I am incapable of one evil

thought in regard to your poor little friend,’ he answered gravely. ‘Perhaps you go a shade too far when you say I admire her. I am very sorry for her, poor child; such a blighted girlhood is a thing to give every honest man the heartache. But I own that, if Mademoiselle Pâquerette were ever so much handsomer and ever so much more fascinating, I should hardly go to the *trolleur*’s den in search of a wife.’

‘Precisely,’ said Lisbeth; ‘and, since that is so, I should think the less you and Pâquerette meet the better.’

‘What nonsense, Lisbeth!’ cried Pauline. ‘Why should you deny poor little Pâquerette a day’s pleasure, which monsieur was so generous as to offer her out of sheer compassion? Pâquerette is not so silly as to misunderstand his kindness; and think what rapture it would be to her to see the woods and the real country, and to dine under green leaves in a garden full of roses and carnations. It would be too cruel to deprive her of such a pleasure.’

‘There are some sweets that leave a bitter taste afterwards,’ said Lisbeth, but the rest of the party took no more notice of her than the Trojans of Cassandra. They were all on Ishmael’s side. What other feeling than pure pity could he enter-

tain for such a poor little waif as Pâquerette, and why deprive her of the kindness he so generously offered? Lisbeth was overruled. The hour for meeting at the railway station was fixed, and Ishmael bade the ladies good afternoon, and went up to his own room under the tiles.

Ishmael's apartment was in every way different from the *trolleur's* den in the rue Sombreuil. He had furnished his lodging himself, with divers substantial pieces of furniture picked up at the secondhand dealers. A fine old cherry-wood *armoire*, solid and substantial as the cabinet work of Rennes or Vitry; a mahogany bureau, style First Empire, ponderous, ungraceful, but passing good of its kind. The little iron bedstead in a corner was screened by a chintz curtain. There were four rush-bottomed chairs, a writing-table in the window, and two deal shelves of Ishmael's own making, filled with useful books, chiefly on mechanics; for this young man had set himself to learn the constructive arts in all their bearing on his trade of mason and builder. He had taken up mathematics also, of which he had learned only the elements from good Père Bresant of Pen-Hoël.

The room was kept with the purity and neatness of a monastic cell. Here, at the little stove

in the corner, Ishmael brewed his coffee in the early morning ; here late into the night he sat at yonder writing-table, studying, reading, thinking, inventing ; for that busy brain of his was full of plans and visions—bridges yet to be built, railways in the far future, aqueducts, viaducts, new roads, new levels. For at least three nights out of seven he gave himself up to hard study, locking his door upon the outside world, lighting his lamp in the early dusk, and working till the small hours. Then, after perhaps but three hours’ sound sleep on his hard pallet, he was up again, brewing his coffee, and off to his work in the chilly morning ; while the market carts were slowly rumbling into the city, laden with fruit and vegetables from distant gardens, and great mountains of sea-fish and river-fish were being sold by auction, and the stomach of Paris, yonder by St.-Eustache, the great central market, was only just beginning its daily functions.

There were other nights which Ishmael spent out of doors ; but these nights were not wasted in the haunts of vice or folly. The young workman had entered with heart and soul into the thronging life of Parisian politics. He went with the representatives of the Left in their championship of republican ideas, their dreams of an ideal

republic—universal suffrage, universal enlightenment. He was a member of two republican societies; adored Victor Hugo; spoke on occasion, and was no mean orator, and was willing to shed his blood in support of his opinions should the hour of conflict come. He knew that among the class with which his lot was cast there were many doubtful specimens, many vile examples of the *genus* working-man; but it seemed to him that the great heart of the people was a noble and a true heart, and that the faults and sins of the people were the faults and sins of circumstance. In a life where there were so many elements of degradation, so few of refinement, so many temptations to baseness, so few inducements to lofty thoughts, he did not look for ideal perfection; but he saw the rudiments of perfectability, and he told himself that with better surroundings and a better education the working-men of Paris would shrink with horror from the low wine-shop and the lower dancing-room, which now constituted the paradise of their idle hours, would turn with loathing from the abject houris of the *bastringue*, the sordid sirens of the Passage Ménilmontant or the rue des Filles-Dieu. He had seen what their pleasures were, and had recoiled shuddering from the edge of that loathsome gulf into which so many had gone down.

He lived among them, won their liking, and yet was not of them.

He thought of his lost home sometimes as he walked back from his work, thought of the half-brothers he had loved so well, and wondered what they were doing in the quiet eventide, and whether they still missed their playmate. He was not angry with his father for the hard words that had hastened his exodus from the old home. He knew that the stepmother's venomous hate had been the true cause of all unkindness on his father's part, helped not a little by those bitter memories of the past which had set a brand upon the eldest son from the very beginning. He was not angry with Fate for having banished him from his birthplace—for having landed him on a lower level in life. He had an indomitable belief in his own power to climb. Already—though he had not been a year in Paris—he had achieved a reputation for superior skill and superior industry. He could command good wages. He saw before him a future in which he would be able to save money—to buy a plot or two of land, perhaps—in those desert wastes and outskirts between the exterior boulevards and the fortifications, where land was so cheap, and where it might some day be of much greater value. The

coming time was to be an age of improvements. Railways were altering the face of the earth. The builder would play an important part in all the undertakings of the future. Already Ishmael imagined a time in which he was to be an employer of labour. His workmen should not be crowded in filthy holes, or given over to Satan and all his works. He would found a brotherhood of industry and temperance. He would build a lay monastery—a mighty barrack for workmen and their families, full of light and air and cleanliness. Men so lodged would be healthier and stronger, better physically and morally; better workmen, giving better value for their wages. Ishmael did not foresee that perfect machinery of trade-unionism which forbids the individual man to work better than his brothers, and insists upon the minimum of labour all round.

Father Bressant's money had long been returned to him out of Ishmael's savings, and the apartment at Ménilmontant had been furnished from the same source. An occasional letter from the good priest told Ishmael how the little world of Pen-Hoël was going on. Monsieur de Caradec was fairly well—he had hunted, and shot a little in the season; but he had an air of not being altogether happy. Madame was an invalid always,

as of old; but the doctor laughed, and said her complaint was only a chronic peevishness, which was likely to increase with years. The two boys thrived splendidly, and their growth was visible to the eye. Next winter Father Bressant was to begin their education, and prepare them for the Polytechnic at Rennes.

Midsummer and the woods of Marly. What could be a more delicious combination? Pâquerette, joyous, though a little ashamed of herself in another borrowed gown, thought that heaven itself could hardly be so lovely as this forest glade in which she was wandering with big Lisbeth and Ishmael — a glade where the sunshine glinted athwart tremulous semi-transparent leaves, and sprinkled the mossy ground with flecks of emerald light that looked like jewels. All the way they came from the city to the village seemed to have been between groves of flowering acacias: the atmosphere was full of their subtle perfume. Pâquerette’s nostrils had never inhaled such sweet odours. And the sky and the water: never had she imagined such a lovely azure. Surely the sky above the rue Sombreuil was of a different colour.

A faint rose-flush lighted her pale cheeks as

she walked in that leafy glade, and listened respectfully, yet understanding very little, while Ishmael expounded the political situation—the chances for and against a *coup d'état*—or a tranquil termination of the Prince President's term of power to Lisbeth, who had a masculine intellect, read newspapers, and was deeply interested in public affairs.

‘A new era has come,’ she said. ‘We loved the Citizen King and his good queen for their own sakes—kind harmless people wishing good to all classes—but under a Republic one feels that the people count for much more—have a right to know how they are being governed—and to question and to understand every act of the Chamber.’

‘It is a pleasure to meet a lady who is interested in public matters’ answered Ishmael, understanding that this little speech of Lisbeth's was in some wise an apology.

Pâquerette strayed away from them every now and then to gather flowers, or to examine mosses or butterflies, like a happy child. The wood was all-sufficient for her happiness. The sunshine, the sweet air, the sense of mystery in those aisles of glancing sunlight and flickering shades, the idea of a glad green world stretching away and away into immeasurable distance, the first vague dawning

sense of the infinite stealing over a mind that had never before understood anything beyond the squalidest, saddest realities—all this was a kind of intoxication, and Pâquerette flew from flower to flower, screaming with rapture at the vision of a butterfly, lifted out of herself and off the common earth by this new delight.

The prudent Lisbeth had made up her mind that Ishmael and Pâquerette were not to be left too much alone. That long walk from Vincennes, in which they had gone so far ahead of the rest, seeming so engrossed in each other, had aroused the wise damsel’s suspicions. It was all very well for Ishmael to protest that he only pitied the poor child. All the world knows that pity is akin to love; and, since he had said that he would not take a wife from that hole in the rue Sombreuil, there was an end of the matter. Poor little Pâquerette’s heart must not be broken. So in all their ramblings—and they went half the way to St.-Germain---Lisbeth took care to be near her *protégée*.

That did not prevent Ishmael talking to Pâquerette, or Pâquerette hanging upon his words with obvious delight. She did not listen while he talked politics: those were dark to her. But, seeing her rapture in flowers and trees and all

living things, he began to talk of these, telling her the names of flowers, the habits of insects and birds, squirrels, rabbits, weasels, moles, field-mice, water-rats—all the free creatures that haunt woods and water-pools. They had been the companions of his boyhood, his books, his study.

‘How can you bear to live in a great town, where there are no such things?’ Pâquerette asked wonderingly.

‘I endure my life in the town because I look forward to the day when I shall be able to have my nest in the country,’ he answered. ‘Not to live there always. Life among woods and fields is a long pastoral dream, an everlasting idyl. A man must have work, movement, progress; and those he can only have at their best in a great centre like Paris. But it is worth while to toil for a week in stony places for one such day as this at the end of the six.’

‘I can understand that,’ said Pâquerette. ‘And now tell me about your own country, as you told me that night—the fairies, the saints, the sacred fires, the sea and the fishing-boats, the wild-boar hunt in which you were nearly killed.’

Ishmael laughed and reddened.

‘I am afraid I talked of nothing but myself that night,’ he said.

'I like to hear you talk of yourself,' she answered simply.

By the time they went back to the village street of Marly, Pâquerette had a lapful of wild flowers, mosses, twigs, tufts of grass, toadstools, and coloured pebbles which she had collected in her woodland walk. She carried her treasures frankly in the skirt of her cotton frock, not ashamed of showing the clean white petticoat and stockings, albeit her shoes were of the shabbiest. The feet in the well-worn shoes were small and slender, like the bare hands which held up the bundle of flowers and mosses.

'I must get a basket for you to carry home your botanical collection,' said Ishmael, laughing at her enthusiasm ; and while the rest of the party were settling down at the humble eating-house, and exploring the little garden in which they were to dine, Ishmael went all over the village to find a shop where he could buy a basket for Pâquerette.

He was not a man to fail in any quest, great or small, and he appeared in the garden with a capacious willow basket hanging over his arm, just as the others were going to sit down to their soup without him. There was a little coloured straw twisted in among the willow, and the basket was altogether the smartest and best he had been able

to buy. Pâquerette gave a little cry of joy when she was told that this beautiful thing was for her. Not since the brass thimble given her by Lisbeth had she received anything that could be called a gift. She trembled and turned pale with delight, as she flung herself down on the grass, with the basket in her lap, and began to arrange her treasures—her oak-apples, and golden-bright toadstools, and foxgloves red and white, and clusters of dog-roses, and long trails of woodbine, and feathery fern-fronds in all the freshness of their midsummer green. She forgot all about dinner, though the soup tureen was steaming on the table in the arbour.

‘What a child she is!’ exclaimed Madame Morice, looking at the slender figure sitting in the sunshine, the small oval face bent over spray and blossom, pale and delicate as the eglantine bloom in the tremulous hand.

‘Come to dinner, Mademoiselle Pâquerette, or your soup will be cold,’ cried Morice, a middle-aged and somewhat obese personage, whose love of a good table had stamped itself upon his honest face in the form of pimples. When any friend of the grocer’s ventured to allude to those pimples, he always declared that they were of a kind that came from poorness of blood, and that it was a duty which he owed himself not to lower his diet.

It was Monsieur Morice who had ordered the dinner at the village *auberge* before they started for their woodland ramble; and he had not restricted himself to the Spartan simplicity which his wife and the Benoît girls had proposed yesterday. He had made a bargain with the innkeeper for a dinner at three francs a head—such a dinner as in Paris would have cost at least six, he told the others triumphantly after the compact had been made.

There was a *bouillon à la bonne femme*, a *consommé* with poached eggs floating in it, over which Morice smacked his lips. Then came a piece of beef, boiled to rags, but made savoury with gherkins and mustard and vinegar. After that followed a *chapon en blanquette*, creamy, velvety, which was discussed in solemn silence, as too beautiful for words. Then came a dish of *petits pois à la beurre*, and anon a salad, made by the worthy Morice himself, with intense gravity; and to crown the whole a large dish of *œufs à la neige*, which appeared simultaneously with a dessert of strong Gruyère, Savoy biscuits, and wood strawberries. Pâquerette had never even dreamed of such a dinner: yet she was too excited to eat much. Ishmael stole a look across the table every now and then to see how

she was getting on. She had a delicate way of eating, child of the people though she was—a delicacy which came from utter indifference to those pleasures of the table which to the worthy Morice yonder were a kind of religion. She reminded Ishmael of his stepmother. She had the same air of fragility, of being made of too fine a clay for her surroundings. And yet she was the grandchild of those two dreadful people in the rue Sombreuil—the woman with the solemn slow speech, the fishy eye, and fixed stare of the habitual tippler; the old man with the brandy-nose, and fevered breath, reeking of *trois-six*. It was out of that hideous den she had come—to that degraded type she belonged. What could she be to him ever? Nothing but a creature to pity, and help in somewise, if it were possible. All through that long dinner, which Morice and his fellow-banquetters protracted to the uttermost by their deliberate enjoyment of every dish, gloating over the unaccustomed daintinesses, Ishmael's mind was filled with the image of Pâquerette, not as she appeared to him now sitting shyly at a corner of the table, half-hidden by the protecting figure of big Lisbeth, but as he had seen her an hour ago in the wood, running after the butterflies, shrieking with delight at the

vision of a tawny squirrel flying from branch to branch among the foliage overhead, climbing a grassy bank to pluck wild roses, a creature kindled into new life by the rapturous revelations of a new world. She would go back to the den in the dark old house—to foul odours and foul sights—at nightfall, and it might be long before she saw that heaven of woodland again. It was not his business to provide her with excursions into the country. Indeed, that sensible young woman Lisbeth Benoit had been disposed to object to his intervention upon this single occasion. He told himself that Lisbeth was right, and that she would have expressed herself even more strongly had she known all. Raymond Caradec's son did not forget that he was gentleman. He had cast in his lot among working-men, but it was with a distinct aim and end. He had sunk in order to rise. He knew that in the mechanical arts he had his chance with the best; and he looked forward to the time when he should be a general where he was now only a ranker. He believed in his certainty of a successful career as firmly as the young recruit believes that he carries a marshal's bâton in his knapsack.

'I shall never disgrace my family by a low marriage,' he said to himself. 'It will be time

enough to think of a wife when I have made my fortune. Youth will have gone by that time; I shall be too old to marry for love,' he reflected, with a sigh; 'but at least I can marry for honour.'

There was no dancing to-day. The little garden, with its arbours for dining-rooms, was too full of company. There was no music, and perhaps most of the little party had dined too well to be inclined for dancing. The Benoîts and their friends sauntered and lounged in the garden, looking at the other guests, who were all in different stages of dining. When they had exhausted this amusement, the elder members of the party went into the house, and looked on at a game of billiards played by a quartette of young soldiers on a very small table, and with a level mediocrity which forbade the pangs of jealousy. An occasional cannon was received with rapture by the whole party, as an achievement calculated to reflect lustre upon every one engaged in the game.

The house and garden reeked with odours of dinner and rank tobacco. Ishmael felt that he could endure that stifling atmosphere no longer, when there was all the wide world of summer beauty within easy reach. Pâquerette sat among the Benoît girls on a rustic bench in a corner of the garden, against a background of scarlet-runners. He would

have liked to ask her to go for a ramble with him ; but he told himself that it was better he should go alone. What were Pâquerette and he to each other that he should choose her out of all the rest as his companion ? He snatched up his cap and went out in a hurry, as if it needed all his resolution to go alone. The little village had a drowsy look in the afternoon light. A bell was ringing for vespers. Ishmael had meant to go far afield, and only to return in time for the starting of the diligence ; but at the open door of the dark little church he stopped and went in, and knelt in a dusty corner, praying for the repose of his mother's soul—for her release from her sins. And at the end he made a little prayer for Pâquerette, that she might be saved from temptations and dangers, lifted out of the sordid gloom of her miserable surroundings, preserved in the purity and innocence of her child-like nature.

He went no further than the church. When the melodious monotonous sing-song of vesper psalms was over he strolled slowly down to the office from which the diligence was to start.

It was a quiet little inn near the water, and he sat on a low wooden parapet above the stream, smoking his cigar, and idly watching the ripples as they flashed and sparkled under the light of a

midsummer moon. Far away above the roadstead of Brest the torches were being lighted, wild figures were flitting to and fro in the twilight, burning brands were being waved in circles, or hurled high in air—a frantic dance, as of demons—and amid the pastoral inland hills and valleys the fires of St. John were being lighted, the shadows of the dead were stealing from the graves to sit beside the friendly blaze, and watch the happy dances of youth and hope. Here, except in the church, yonder, nobody seemed to care much about St. John. A few tapers burning in a side chapel, a few flowers on an altar, and that was all.

He wondered what his little brothers were doing to-night—if they had gone out with the farm-servants to see the fires, or if they were mewed up in that dreary salon, where their mother nursed her everlasting *migraine*, while the father brooded over his books, joyless, hopeless, having drained the cup of disappointment to the dregs.

Ishmael sat by the river till the diligence was ready to start, and the rest of the party came hurrying along the road from the village, breathless, excited, full of talk and laughter. When the soldiers had finished their game, Monsieur Dulac and the Benoît girls had made another quartette, the gentleman giving the ladies their first lesson

in billiards. And the game had caused infinite laughter; Madame Dulac, a stout, comfortable-looking young woman, with *accroche-cœurs* on her forehead, pretending to be intensely jealous, and Monsieur Morice swelling with pride in the consciousness of being a great billiard-player *en retraite*, while he coached the Benoît girls through the game, showing them at what angle to hold their cues, and stooping down with one eye shut to make a preliminary survey of the balls before every stroke.

While all the others laughed and talked, Pâquerette walked silently beside her friend Pauline, hugging her basket. In her ignorance of all rustic life she had no thought that the woodland sprays and flowers would all be faded to-morrow, that the orange-tawny fungus would lose its beauty, and become a thing to be cast upon the dust-heap. She had a dim idea that flowers and leaves would be bright and fair for ever, sweet memorials of this one exquisite day in her young life—a day never to be forgotten, never to be repeated. Such joys could come only once in a lifetime. And yet she had suffered a sense of loss all the evening, after Ishmael had left the party—a feeling that the day’s delight was over, a vague sadness which she had struggled against, since it were base ingratitude to her friends to be less than utterly happy.

And now as she stood a little aloof from the others, silent, thoughtful, waiting to mount to her place in the diligence, Ishmael came not near her. Why was he so different from what he had been at Vincennes—almost as if he were another person? Nor did he seem the same person who had brought her the basket a few hours ago. He sat looking across the river, smoking, grave, silent. He did not even glance her way: had forgotten that such a creature lived. Her heart swelled; she felt angry, and then inclined to cry. Why did he treat her so cruelly?

Presently they all began to scramble into the coach. She hoped that he would sit beside her, that he would tell her about his native Brittany—the fairies, the poulpicains, the strange stone monuments, altars of a departed religion. No. For a few moments it would have been quite easy for him to have taken the seat by her side; but he let the occasion slip, and behold, she was screwed into a corner of the *banquette*, with the plethoric Morice almost sitting upon her, and two of the Benoît girls between her and Ishmael, who occupied the seat next the driver.

On the railway, where they all sat in an open compartment on the roof of the carriage, whence one had a delightful view of the country—some-

what flavoured and obscured by smoke from the engine, Ishmael's seat was again remote from the corner occupied by Pâquerette. Her eyes were clouded with tears of disappointment and vexation. The landscape had lost all its charms; the very scent of the acacias was hateful. She could see nothing but frivolity and silliness in the delight of the Benoît girls as the train crossed the river by Asnières. The great lamp-lit city yonder, which would have seemed to her a magical thing had she been in her right mind, was only a something strange that had no charm for her.

The party broke up at the terminus. The Morices, the Dulacs, and Ishmael went their way; and the other four, under convoy of big Lisbeth, plunged fearlessly into the dark and narrow streets which in those days lay between the station and the faubourg St.-Antoine.

The walk was long, and Pâquerette was passing weary by the time they got to the rue Sombreuil. She found the old people in an unusually amiable temper. The *charabia* had dropped in to supper, and had brought a knuckle of ham in his pocket, and had paid for a *saladier* of red wine *à la française*, and the entertainment was at its most cheerful stage when Pâquerette came in.

'Well, little Rag, hast thou enjoyed thyself

with thy *bourgeois* friends, thy grocers and respectabilities of Ménilmontant?' asked Père Lemoine. 'Hast thou had a pleasant day yonder?'

'I have had a horrid day; I am tired to death,' cried Pâquerette peevishly.

She threw the basket—Ishmael's gift—into a corner, flung herself into a clumsy old wooden chair with a ragged rush seat, covered her face with her hands, and burst into tears.

The *trolleur* and his wife looked at each other with a grave significance, half shocked, half amused. The idea of both was that Pâquerette had been given a little too much wine—*elle avait sa pointe, pauvre p'tite*.

For these two there was only one ruling passion—the love of the bottle. As they looked at Pâquerette, white, tearful, they had no apprehension of that other passion which has its influence upon the minds and ways of men and women; as strong and even more fatal than the craving for strong drink.

The *charabia* had a keener eye for the situation.

'Perhaps her sweetheart has not behaved well,' he said. 'Say, then, little Pâquerette; say, then, my pretty pale flower, hast thou a sweetheart already, and has he begun to play thee false at the very beginning?'

He went across the room and chucked Pâquerette under the chin with his fat forefinger. The very touch seemed pollution.

She sprang to her feet, looked at him with eyes aflame, and cheeks white with wrath.

‘How dare you!’ she cried, then rushed past him, snatched up her basket, and locked herself in her little closet of a bedchamber—the room to which her mother had crept back to die.

‘*Quelle diablesse!*’ exclaimed the *charabia*, shrugging his broad shoulders, and going quietly back to his seat to renew his attack upon the *saladier*.

CHAPTER XI.

‘THE CITY IS FULL OF VIOLENCE.’

SEBASTIEN CARADEC — otherwise Ishmael — was a man of fixed and steadfast mind. Once having resolved within himself that Pâquerette was no wife for him—that he would bring disgrace and dishonour on his house were he to choose a wife of the trolleur’s blood—he made it his business to see no more of the pale wild-flower face, the pleading blue eyes, with their pathetic look, which had reminded him of a little thing he had read in a magazine, translated from an English writer—the sentimental reverie of a philosophic gentleman upon a caged starling, which fluttered against the bars of its cage, reiterating its piteous cry, ‘I can’t get out, I can’t get out.’

To his fancy, Pâquerette’s pathetic eyes had pleaded, just as the starling pleaded, for release from a cruel captivity—the bondage of squalid poverty and vicious surroundings.

He was sorry for her—he admired her—but

the divine spark was not kindled in his breast. He was heart-whole, and could afford to renounce her. But he did not easily forget her. The vision of her radiant face in the wood, illumined with the rapture of a new happiness, haunted him often. Still he was steadfast.

Madame Morice invited him to join in two or three more Sunday afternoon pleasure trips before the summer and early autumn were over; but on each occasion he pleaded business, or an engagement of some kind; and so the year wore on, and time and chance brought about no meeting between him and Pâquerette.

He was full of occupation at this period: his life was crowded with interests. His ardour as politician, republican, reformer had increased with every week of his residence in Paris. He had caught the spirit of the time, which was ardent, eager, expectant of change. The men of the Left were for the most part young men, idealists, impossible-ists, impetuous, daring; and youth among the working-classes was fired by the sparks that flashed from the Republican party in the Senate. The men who make the revolutions of Paris are not always Parisians; indeed, it is a fact to be noted that the men who achieve great things, either in politics or commerce in a

metropolis, are rarely men born and bred in that metropolis. It is the province—the fresh, free air of mountain and sea—the wide wastes of Gascogne—the moorlands of Berry—the hills of Auvergne—which send their vigorous young blood to do and dare in the capital. Seldom is it from the stones of the city that her soldiers and senators spring.

Ishmael was intense in all things; and, steeped in the ideas of his club, he became before December as ardent a republican as any of those fiery spirits of the *tiers-état* who helped to make the Revolution of 1789. He had sat at the feet of such teachers as Victor Hugo and Louis Blanc. He had spoken on the side of the people, and he believed in the divine right of the people, as against the right of kings.

Going to his work in the chill dawn of the second of December, there was nothing in the air of Belleville or Ménilmontant to tell Sébastien Caradec that a great political convulsion, that a daring cast for Empire, had been begun during the night; that under the cover of darkness, statesmen and generals, the senators of France, had been surprised in their beds by an armed police, bound, and gagged, and carried out of their homes, amidst the shrieking of agonised wives, the tears of scared children—carried off on the first

stage of the dismal journey to Mazas, Ham, or Cayenne. And yet this thing had been done.

Last night a little scene, quiet—yet eminently dramatic, by reason of the repose, the reserved force of the chief actors—had been performed in the Palace of the Elysée, in a brilliantly-lighted room, amidst a crowd of guests. Late in the evening, the Prince-President, leaning with his back against the mantelpiece in the large drawing-room, summoned Colonel Vieyra, the chief of the staff, by a little look.

'Colonel, can you command your countenance if I tell you something startling?' he asked quietly.

'I think so, my Prince.'

'Good. *It is for to-night.* Can you assure me that to-morrow morning the drums shall not beat the rappel?'

'Assuredly; if I have a sufficient staff under my orders.'

This instruction was obeyed to the letter. Before morning the parchment of every drum had been split under the eyes of Vieyra.

'See Saint-Arnaud,' said the Prince; 'and at six o'clock to-morrow be at head-quarters. Let no member of the National Guard go out in uniform.'

The President and the Colonel separated after

this conversation, which had not attracted any attention.

At the same hour Monsieur de Morny—friend, kinsman, partisan of the Gallic Cæsar—was flitting from box to box at the Opéra Comique, full of small talk and high spirits—courtier, man-of-the world, viveur, diplomatist, cynic, a being of mysterious birth, as it were the issue of the Elder Gods,—the most fascinating, cleverest, bravest, most dangerous man in France.

‘People tell me that the President of the Republic is going to make a clean sweep of the Chamber,’ said the wife of one of Louis Philippe’s officers, as de Morny bent over her chair during the *entr’acte*. ‘What is to become of you?’

‘If the broom is to be used, Madame, I hope I shall be on the side of the handle,’ answered de Morny lightly.

Before the latest visitors departed from the Elysée Louis Napoleon had retired to his study, where de Morny, Saint Arnaud, de Maupas, and Mocquard were waiting for him. Mocquard was devoted to the Prince—bound to him by old associations of the tenderest character. Cæsar’s secrets could not be in safer hands. Thus it was Mocquard who had prepared the portfolio which contained the papers—list of names, plan of action,

and, above all the sinews of war, in the shape of several millions of francs advanced by the Bank of France—necessary to the successful issue of the drama which was to be begun to-night. Upon this portfolio was inscribed the mystic word, RUBICON.

The second of December, 1851, might be called the Day of Protestations. In the High Court of Paris seven judges of the highest jurisdiction sat in solemn assembly, and protested against the flagrant violation of the Constitution, and summoned the chief of the State to appear before them, charged with the crime of high treason. But the action of the law is slow, and individually, from the human stand-point of intense hatred of Cavaignac and the Reds, the seven judges were all friendly to Prince Louis Napoleon. The proceedings of the High Court were therefore adjourned until the following day, and this solemn conclave produced only protest number one. Latest example of mountain and mouse.

Protest number two was signed by the members of the State Council.

Protest number three emanated from the journalists of Paris, who could not remain neutral when national interests were at stake.

With some difficulty they met at the office of the *Siècle*, and agreed to the terms of their protestation, which was covered with signatures ; but when it came to the question of printing this manifesto—the voice of the national press, the interpretation of popular feeling—there were insurmountable difficulties.

The iron hand of Cæsar had barred every printing-office in Paris.

‘Why waste powder upon protestations?’ cried Emile de Girardin. ‘Go and shut up the Bourse. That is the thing to be done.’

Later he had a wider proposition: a universal strike. No tradesman to sell his goods ; no artisan to work ; stagnation—starvation—the stillness of a city struck with death—till the outraged deputies should be set at liberty, and the authority of the violated Chamber restored.

Neither of these ideas was put into action. Bakers will bake and sell their bread ; butchers will kill ; the beaten round of daily life will go on, albeit the Constitution—an abstract noun which has different meanings in the minds of different people—may be trampled under foot.

Ishmael left his work yonder by Belleville, and went into the heart of Paris. The Boulevard des Italiens was in those days the forum

of the Parisians ; and here on the steps in front of Tortonî's, which served as the tribune, the fever of expectation, doubt, suspicion, was at its height. Yet it was not a violent fever. Paris took the *coup-d'État* very lightly.

The middle classes were undecided ; the people were doubtful. The Faubourg Saint-Antoine, even—once the very altar of liberty, the cradle of revolution—was as quiet as the grave. A sluggish dulness seemed to have crept over the spirits of the working-classes—a timid acceptance of things as they were—a fear of upsetting a line of statecraft which seemed to be working for the material comfort and prosperity of the artisan. Even the *ébénistes* were indifferent, and had to be lashed and stung into action by the eloquence of Victor Hugo, the earnestness of Schœlcher and Baudin. The disinterested love of liberty, for its own sake, was to be found only among these representatives of the Left—still free to move about among their fellow-men, brandishing the torch of revolution, calling to the very stones of Paris to rise against the tyrant : still free, but already under the ban, and obliged to meet together in secret, afraid to seek the shelter of their own homes.

The brief winter day wore on to its early

close. Twice during that day the Prince-President showed himself to the people—as it were between the acts of the drama. He left the Elysée on horseback, accompanied by his marshals—a brilliant cavalcade—and rode as far as the rue de Rivoli. It has been said that he expected one of those outbursts of enthusiasm from the populace which carry a man to the throne—taken off his feet, as it were, and swept on to the royal platform by the irresistible flood-tide of public feeling. But there was no such ovation: and the Prince went back to the Elysée, to show himself again late in the afternoon, when the acclamations were more numerous.

At four o'clock the Republican party—disturbed at their first rendezvous, driven from pillar to post by rumours of the police on their track—met for deliberation in a house on the Quai de Jemmapes. A committee of resistance was named, the eloquent voice, the fiery spirit of which was Victor Hugo; and late that night the same party, swollen by many additional members, met secretly in the workshops of Frédéric Cournet, in the rue de Popincourt; Victor Hugo in the chair; Baudin, a brave and bold spirit, Hugo's junior by ten years, seated at the master-spirit's side, as secretary.

An armed resistance was the sole idea of the assembly.

‘Listen,’ cried Victor Hugo. ‘Bear in mind what you are doing. On one side, a hundred thousand men, batteries, arsenals, cannon, munitions of war sufficient for another Russian campaign. On the other side, a hundred and twenty representatives of the people, a thousand or so of patriots, six hundred muskets. Not a drum to beat the rappel. Not a bell to sound the tocsin. Not a press to print a proclamation. Only here and there a lithographic workshop, a cellar, where a placard may be produced hastily with a brush. Death to any man who takes up a paving stone in the street; death to all who meet as agitators; death to any man who placards an appeal to arms. If you are arrested during the fight—death; if after the fight—transportation. On one side, the army and a crime; on the other side, a handful of men and the right. These are the odds against us. Do you accept the challenge?’

A unanimous cry responded to the appeal. Yes, against any odds—yes, in the teeth of the tyrant—face to face with death, the men of the Left were ready.

If was midnight when the assembly decided that the Reds should meet to-morrow morning in

the Café Roysin, in front of the Marché Lenoir—the representatives of the people in the bosom of the people; in the arms of the artisan class—relying on the courage and the energy of that people to bring to bear an overwhelming force of opposition against the armed might of the usurper.

THE rue Sainte-Marguerite is unique after its kind, and claims distinction as one of the most horrible streets in Paris. It is the chosen abode of the rag-pickers, mendicants, organ-grinders, monkey-men, epileptics, blind, lepers, deaf and dumb, the dealers in tortoiseshell combs and brass watchguards. The Bohemia of a new Court of Miracles has its rendezvous here. Hence they sally forth, these jovial beggars of modern Paris, the blind and the lame, the maimed and the dumb, joyous, fresh, hearty, in the early morning, each going to his post, his particular corner on bridge or at church door. Their faces are not yet composed into the professional aspect, the lugubrious droop of the lips is not yet assumed; for here they are still *en famille*, still behind the scenes. The play begins a little later.

In the early morning, while the beggars and

saltimbanques issue forth to their daily round, the rue Sainte-Marguerite is alive with the return of the rag-pickers. From all sides—by the rue de Charonne, by the faubourg, by the rue de Vaucanson, the rue Crozatier—they come, drooping under their burdens, preceded by loathsome odours, stumbling and slouching along the muddy pathways, tremulous, staggering, backs aching, eyes dim with the long labours of a night spent in going up and down the streets, stooping a thousand times under the heavy load, to explore a heap of foulest refuse. The lanterns swing feebly upon the ends of the long sticks, expiring in a stench of rancid oil. Silently, wearily, the rag-pickers crawl to their dens, while the cheery mountebanks jog gaily on to begin a new day.

Heavens, what a street! black, dismal, malodorous; windows whose rotten woodwork has long forgotten the sensation of glass; windows choked with straw, rags, paper,—what you will. Mud always, even when the rest of Paris is clean. Mist and dampness always, even when the better parts of Paris are bright and clear. Disease always, in more or less revolting form. Hunger always: never enough to eat, yet always, strange paradox, too much to drink. When it is a

question of bread or *trois-six*, the *chiffonnier* prefers his *trois-six*. Can you blame him? Every bone in his body is familiar to him as a sensation of pain. The bread could do him so little good. But the vile spirit burns, and that is something.

The angle formed by the junction of the rue Sainte-Marguerite and the rue de la Cotte, was the scene of the one heroic act in the history of the *coup d'État*. Here was erected the first barricade. Here Baudin fell.

There was an air of fatality in all the circumstances of that first barricade. There had been the meeting at the Café Roysin. A minority of Victor Hugo's party arrived at the rendezvous at eight o'clock. The majority understood the hour to be from nine to ten. The café was a large building, with high windows and looking-glasses against the wall, the usual marble tables, plenty of seats, several billiard-tables in the middle of the apartment.

The representatives were received with a friendly air. They were soon joined by a number of strangers, all as earnest as themselves. There were workmen among them, but no blouses. The artisans had been requested to wear coats, lest the shopkeepers should take fright at the aspect

of the blouse, as a badge of revolution. The horrors of '48 were still fresh in the minds of the middle classes; and the workman's blouse was the livery of the Red Spectre, the genius of anarchy and destruction, about which such terrible things had been said and written of late.

Among these men of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine was Ishmael, who had cast in his lot with the Reds. He had come to Paris when the memory of '48 was still fresh in the minds of men; and his young and ardent temper saw the struggle for liberty in its noblest aspect. He read the writings of Hugo and Schœlcher, whose articles in the Republican papers had done much to kindle the fire of enthusiasm in the minds of the people. And now, in the cold, rainy December morning, through the muddy streets, he came to cast in his lot with those gallant spirits who, against overwhelming odds, were to try the question of Liberty versus Despotism. Granted that the despot's rule may have been in the main better for France; that, from the chaos of divided opinions, it was well that one man should stand forth—daring, enlightened, judicious—and take his place boldly at the helm of the national barque; still, looking back at those three dark December days, who can doubt that the truer heroism, the purer

love of country, was to be found among that handful of men who flung themselves into the arms of the people, and challenged that people to defend their violated rights?

Unhappily for these heroes of the Left, the artisan class was cold to the voice of patriotism. The representatives of the Right had been disliked and feared, suspected as Royalists, Reactionists, and no one was offended at the idea of their having all been whisked off to prison, plucked out of their beds in the dead of night, turned out of their seats in the Chamber, carted about from pillar to post by their captors, like sheep carried to the market. It is difficult to conceive what would be the effect upon English society if the household troops were to swoop down upon the House of Commons and carry a troublesome majority off to the Tower. Yet this sweeping out of the French Chamber by a military force hardly seems to have created surprise or indignation among the populace of Paris. They thought the clearing out of the Senators a good riddance; and as they were given to understand that it meant the establishment of universal suffrage, the general feeling was at the outset in favour of the Dictator.

While the little knot of Reds were waiting for the rest of their party in front of the Café Roysin,

an omnibus came along at a sharp trot, escorted by a squadron of lancers, and filled with those members of the Chamber who had spent the night miserably, under watch and ward, at the d’Orsay Barracks, and who were now being carried off to Vincennes.

In an instant there arose a cry from the men of the Left: ‘They are the representatives of the people! Save them!’ There was a dash at the horses’ heads, and vigorous hands caught the bridles. The first omnibus was stopped, the door was opened; but the prisoners, instead of alighting, entreated their would-be liberators to let them alone. They would rather go to prison than be so rescued.

A scornful laugh broke from the workmen who had stood by looking on at the attempted rescue; and this exhibition of poltroonery on the part of their senators may have helped to damp their ardour in the brief struggle which followed.

Baudin was a medical man, better known to the workmen of the faubourg Poissonnière than to those of Saint-Antoine. An eloquent speaker, an honest man, the chief voice now in the little knot of Reds waiting the advent of their colleagues. Ishmael had heard him speak on many occasions, and honoured him. He drew near his elbow now, waiting to see what was going to happen, his pulses beating high, ready

to help with heart and hand in the work that was to be done. Baudin knew him by sight, and knew him to be a staunch Republican. He gave him a friendly nod as he stood talking to one of his colleagues.

There was an impatience to do something—not to wait for the others. Baudin would fain have waited till their numbers were stronger ; but he yielded to the eagerness of Schoelcher and the rest, all on fire for the fray.

Among a hundred and fifty men they were able, by disarming the sentinels at the two nearest guard-houses, to distribute thirty muskets, the soldiers giving their arms with a friendly air to the cry of ‘Vive la République!’ A cart carrying manure approached the rue Sainte-Marguerite at the angle where it joins the rue Cotte. The cart was thrown over, the barricade was begun. A baker’s cart followed ; then a milkwoman’s cart, strong, heavy ; finally an omnibus. The four vehicles, placed in line were hardly broad enough to bar the main street of the faubourg. Empty baskets were heaped on the top. The handful of representatives, in their tricoloured scarfs, the handful of their friends, Ishmael among them, took their stand on the barricade just as a boy rushed along the street shouting ‘The troops!’ and the steady tramp of

men, the jingle of arms, was heard drawing nearer and nearer.

Two companies were coming from the Bastille, marshalled at equal distances, and barring the entire street. Doors and windows were shut precipitately. The critical moment had come.

‘Citizens,’ said Schœlcher, ‘let no shot be fired. When the army and the city fight, it is the blood of the people that is shed on both sides. Let us first address the soldiers.’

‘Down with the twenty-five francs!’ cried a group of blouses at the corner of the rue Sainte-Marguerite, alluding scornfully to the salary of the representatives.

Baudin looked at the men steadily from his post on the barricade.

‘You shall see how a man can die for twenty-five francs,’ he said.

The two columns of soldiers were now in sight of the insurgents, and behind them in the distance gleamed the bayonets of another troop.

Steadily, slowly, the two companies advanced upon the barricade; and then the frightened inhabitants, peering from their closed windows, the lukewarm loungers on the pavement, beheld a noble spectacle.

Seven representatives of the people, with no

other defence than their official scarves, came in front of the barricade and approached the soldiers, who waited for them with their muskets pointed, while the rest of the party manned the barricade—Baudin standing upon the overturned omnibus, the upper half of his figure exposed to the attack.

Then followed a dialogue between Schœlcher and an officer in command—resolute, intrepid, on both sides. The republican deputy urged the majesty of the violated law—called upon the soldier to respect the constitution. The soldier recognised no law beyond the orders of his superior.

‘Gentlemen of the Chamber,’ said the Captain finally, ‘retire, or I shall give the command to fire.’

‘Fire!’ cried one of the seven. Then, as at Fontenoy, the representatives of the people took off their hats and faced the levelled muskets.

‘Charge bayonets!’ cried the Captain; and there was a movement forward; but the soldiers shrank from wounding these unarmed men, as from a double treason; because they were the representatives of the people, and because they were defenceless. Not a blow was struck, not a shot was fired, till, by an unhappy accident, the

point of a bayonet hit Schœlcher and tore his scarf. The act was seen from the barricade, and one of the Reds, believing his colleague in danger, fired, and hit the soldier, who fell, shot through the heart. He was a conscript, a lad of eighteen. This fatal shot was the signal for a volley from the soldiers. They stormed the feeble rampart; Baudin was killed, and the barricade taken.

Let it be noted that the soldiers—they who were to-morrow to riot in a carnival of murder—had, up to this point, acted with singular forbearance. They took no prisoners; the defenders of the barricade were allowed to disperse quietly in the surrounding streets, and to find a friendly refuge in neighbouring houses. So far the army was blameless. But on this morning of the third the men were still sober. The money distributed with such lavish hand among the soldiery had not yet begun to be spent on that liquid fire, which, later, transformed veterans and lads alike into madmen, murderers, demons almost as deadly as the copper-faced assassins of Delhi and Cawnpore.

CHAPTER XII.

‘DEATH IS COME UP INTO OUR WINDOWS.’

ISHMAEL was among the last to leave the scene of that short, sharp struggle. He helped to carry the expiring Baudin to the hospital of Sainte-Marguerite. He was one of those who lifted the body of the young conscript from the muddy, trampled ground in front of the barricade—a slender, boyish figure, buttoned to the chin in the gray military overcoat, one red stain upon the breast showing where the bullet had gone home. This dismal work over, Ishmael loitered about the faubourg, disheartened, stupified almost by the sight of those two dead faces, one of which, aflame with the fire of patriotism, ennobled by the power of intellect, had been so familiar to him in life. The conflict had but just begun—feebly, hopelessly begun—and already one of the best and bravest of Liberty’s champions had fallen!

Not since his mother’s death until to-day had Ishmael looked upon the face of the dead. He

turned from the hospital door with a strange dream-like feeling—a sense of hardly belonging to the actual world around him. Those two yonder, calm on their hospital beds, had passed to the other side of the river,—the shadowy, mystic, unexplored country on the further bank. And if the conflict between the despot and the people were to continue, who could say how many more must fall as Baudin had fallen, counting the cost of a life as a feather when weighed against the freedom of a nation?

'What would it matter to any one if I were lying beside Dr. Baudin?' Ishmael asked himself, with a shrug of his broad shoulders. 'My father would perhaps never know my fate, or if he heard of it would hardly be sorry. My stepmother would be glad; and my brothers—well, poor little lads, they are young enough to have forgotten me before now. A year is a long time in their little lives. It would be too much to expect to be remembered after such an interval.'

He took a draught of wine at a shop in the rue de la Roquette, and as he was going out of the door brushed against an old man whose face was familiar to him, although he did not remember where or when they had met.

The other was keener, and remembered Ishmael perfectly.

‘Good day, citizen; grand doings yonder by the gentlemen in scarves,’ he said; ‘but we want no more barricades; the faubourg has had enough fighting: we want a quiet life, and to be paid fairly for our work, and to take our drop of little blue in peace.’

Ishmael remembered him now. It was the old trolleur, Pâquerette’s grandfather. He had been drinking already, though it was not yet noon, and was in that cheery state which might be described as *bien, poivre, allumé, bon zig*. Ishmael would fain have passed him with briefest greeting, but the old man laid a grimy claw upon his sleeve. ‘If you were going to take *un canon de la bouteille*, or to rinse your beak with fine champagne, for example, I’m with you,’ he said. ‘Let us enjoy ourselves as good comrades.’

Ishmael was obviously leaving the shop, but he was not of a temper to refuse a drink, even to this old vagabond.

‘I shall drink no more this morning,’ he said, ‘but I’ll pay for whatever you please to order.’

Influenced more by a desire to hear of Pâquerette than from a wish to be civil to the *ébéniste* Ishmael turned back into the little wine-

shop, and seated himself at a table opposite Père Lemoine.

The bottle of fine champagne was brought, a bright oily yellow liquid which sparkled like a gleam of sunshine against the dull gray winter light. The waiter put a couple of glasses beside the bottle, and Père Lemoine filled both.

'Mine and yours,' he said. 'Don't be frightened. You shall drink in the spirit, and I in the body. A brace of such thimblefuls can harm nobody. So you have had your little barricade yonder, my friend; you have had your finger in the revolutionary pie; and for the only result one of the best of your Reds has been shot; he has drunk a fine soup, poor fellow, and what are any of you the better? Victor Hugo and the rest of them want to rouse the faubourg. They want Saint-Antoine to come to handigrips with that fine gentleman yonder in the Elysée, with his curly moustache and red stripes down his trousers, and his recollections of my uncle. But the faubourg has had enough of barricades. She has shed her blood by hogsheads, poured out her heart's blood as freely as they are pouring that little blue wine yonder. And what is she the better for the sacrifice of her children? She is master for a day, to be trampled under foot

to-morrow. Reaction, reaction—turn out an Orleans, and bring back a Bourbon of the elder branch. Anything rather than that the people should keep the privileges for which they have bled. I shall fight on no more barricades, my friend. I have seen too many of them, and I know how little comes of the fuss and bother. Saint-Antoine is wise by experience. Victor Hugo and his friends may sermonise till they are hoarse, but they won't rouse the faubourg. To your health, monsieur Ishmael, out of glass number one; and now to my health from monsieur Ishmael, glass number two;' and the old toper swallowed the contents of both glasses without winking.

'There may be other faubourgs more patriotic,' answered Ishmael; 'there may be those who will avenge the blood of Baudin. But don't let us talk politics. The subject is not the safest; and you must remember that I am a new comer, and have hardly had time to form my opinions.'

'Ah! but you have formed them: I can see it in the resolute cut of your chin—your iron mouth. You are a Baudiniste, a Schœlcheriste, a socialist of the strongest pattern, and you are thirsting for another barricade. Before night you may have your choice of fifty, perhaps. But not

in our faubourg: we had enough in '48. Try the centre of Paris, the old streets in the market quarter, the neighbourhood of Saint-Eustache: that is the citadel of the people; a town within a town: there they are impregnable—every alley a trap for their enemies; every house a fortress. That is the true strength of old Paris; that is the cradle of all the great revolutions: the League, the Fronde, the Terror: go there, my friend, if you want barricades.'

'Have no fear. I will go wherever a strong arm is wanted,' answered Ishmael. 'And now tell me about your granddaughter, mademoiselle Pâquerette. She is well, I hope?'

'She is well. She had need be well. She is on the high road to good fortune. An honest man—a bourgeois, with a shop in this very street, and a snug little nest behind his shop, and a back-yard to store his goods, such a man as one does not meet every day in the Rue Sombreuil—has asked her to be his wife.'

Ishmael started, with a sudden touch of pain. He had never been in love with Pâquerette. He had existed for nearly six months without seeing the pale, snowdrop face; and yet his heart sank within him at the thought that another man was to pluck this pearl out of

the gutter, this gem which he had not stooped to gather out of the mire, too careful lest his hands should be soiled in the process. Truly it were hardly a pleasant thing to have this Père Lemoine here, whose unsteady hand was now in the act of pouring out a fourth glass of fine champagne, for one's grandfather-in-law.

‘I am glad that mademoiselle Pâquerette is to have such a good husband,’ said Ishmael. ‘Pray who is the gentleman?’

‘A friend of mine who has done business with me for twenty years; an Auvergnat—a hard-working, frugal creature, who, beginning in the humblest way, has saved enough money to set up as a dealer in furniture and curiosities—a fine trade always—and whose first thought, worthy soul! on beginning life in his own house, was to ask Pâquerette to be his wife.’

‘An Auvergnat: your Charabia, I suppose?’ exclaimed Ishmael, disgusted. ‘Why, that is the man whom Pâquerette abhors; at least, she told me so six months ago.’

‘She is a child, and does not know her own mind. She likes him well enough now, I can tell you.’

‘But you say he has been doing business for twenty years. He must be forty years of age?’

'Suppose he is forty! What harm is there in forty years, do you think?' cried the trolleur, smacking his lips over the fine champagne, and sending little gusts of fiery breath across the table towards Ishmael. 'A man at forty is in his prime. I am forty, and twenty-seven years on the top of forty, and I am in *my* prime. *Cré nom!* a man of forty is in the very blossom of youth. Bring me no schoolboy bridegrooms for my granddaughter. I want a sensible man, a man who knows how to rule a wife. I married when I was five-and-twenty, and I have been sorry for it ever since. A man should be master from the first.'

'I hope you are not going to sell your granddaughter to this Charabia, as you have sold your furniture,' said Ishmael gravely.

'My faith! he shall pay me a fair price for her,' said the trolleur, whose illumination was becoming a little more vivid with every fresh glass. 'What is the use of a *torchon* like that if one cannot turn an honest penny by her? She has eaten and drunk at my cost long enough, little *fainéante*. It is time she got someone else to pay for her *pâtée*, and to make a handsome present to her grandfather into the bargain.'

‘I am afraid you are forcing this marriage upon mademoiselle,’ said Ishmael, chinking a glass against the bottle as a summons to the waiter, and as a gentle hint that he did not mean to pay for any more brandy.

The waiter came, scrutinised the bottle, which was marked in measured degrees like a thermometer, a downward scale which might be taken as emblematic of the descent of Avernus, and took payment for Père Lemoine’s four glasses.

‘I force a marriage upon her! Why the child is as proud as a queen at getting such a husband—a shop in the rue de la Roquette—two rooms, furnished: why the Tuileries are not better furnished than Jean Baugiste’s little salon, all in mahogany, of the Empire style, substantial, splendid; a gilded clock and candelabra on the mantelpiece, a secretaire that belonged to Talleyrand, a room fit for a duchess. Force! do you say? Why her grandmother and I have spoiled the girl ever since she was a baby. Come and see for yourself if you think we are ill-using her.’

Ishmael hesitated for a moment or so, while he mechanically counted the change out of his five-franc piece. After all, Pâquerette’s marriage was no business of his. He had made up his mind last Midsummer that she was no fitting

wife for him. But he remembered how Pâquerette had spoken of the Charabia on that May night, when they two had walked from Vincennes; he recalled her shudder as she confessed her hatred of the man, a hatred she feared to avow in her own wretched home. This recollection decided him. He did not want to put himself forward as a suitor for Pâquerette; but if he could save her from an odious marriage, defend her from the tyranny of this drunken scoundrel of a grandfather, he would do it, even at some cost to himself.

‘I should like to see mademoiselle, and congratulate her on her marriage,’ he said quietly, ‘if my visit will not trouble you.’

‘Come along then: we are sure to find the little hussy at home. She does nothing all day but roll one thumb round the other, and listen to any organ-grinder who comes our way.’

The trolleur sauntered along the street by Ishmael’s side, with the easy rolling walk of a man who has spent half his life in sauntering idleness, always more or less *allumé*. He seemed to know almost every one he passed, and saluted his acquaintances with a friendly nod. Most of the shops were closed, and there were a good many people in the streets; but the faubourg had a quiet air, almost a Sabbath-day tranquillity.

‘Saint-Antoine sleeps,’ said Père Lemoine.

Presently at a street corner he stopped to look at the freshest placard on the dead wall of an old uninhabited house. It was the latest manifesto from the Élysée, the printer’s ink still wet.

‘INHABITANTS OF PARIS,—

‘The enemies of order have engaged in a struggle. It is not against the Government or the elect of the people that they fight; their purpose is pillage and destruction. Let all good citizens unite for the preservation of order and of their menaced homes. Be calm, inhabitants of Paris; let no curious idlers block the streets; they interfere with the movements of those brave soldiers who desire to protect you with their bayonets.

‘For me, you will find me unshaken in my determination to defend and maintain order.’

‘So much for the Prince,’ said the trolleur; ‘but here’s a postscript from the General.’

‘The Minister of War, in accordance with the law during a state of siege, decrees:—

‘That every person taken in the act of constructing or defending a barricade, or carrying arms, shall be shot.

‘DE SAINT-ARNAUD, Minister of War.

‘It is not child’s play you see, my friend, this barricade-making for which you are so eager,’ said the trolleur, grinning, as with tremulous hand he plucked the wet placard off the wall and flung it into the gutter.

Below the President’s manifesto there was a placard issued by the Reds, a shabby lithographed placard—since there was not a printing press in Paris at the disposal of the people in these first days of December—a poor little placard stuck on the wall with four red wafers.

‘TO THE PEOPLE.

‘Art 3. The constitution is confided to the guardianship of every patriotic Frenchman.

‘Louis Napoleon is an outlaw.

‘The state of siege is abolished.

‘Universal suffrage is re-established.

‘Vive la République!’

‘To Arms!’

‘For the united Mountain,

‘Signed, VICTOR HUGO.’

‘Spuffle!’ exclaimed the trolleur: ‘Louis Bonaparte has the Army. Unless the national guard unite with the people he will have things his

own way. It is not worth while arguing nice points of the constitution with a disputant who has a hundred thousand soldiers at his back.'

He plucked off the patriots' appeal as scornfully as he had torn away the President's manifesto, and flung the crumpled paper after the other. Then in sheer wantonness, while he contemptuously discussed the President and his surroundings, the trolleur peeled at least half-a-dozen weather-beaten and mud-stained placards from the wall—playbills, shopkeepers' advertisements—till he came to an old and scarcely legible placard.

'See,' he cried, pointing to the wall. 'Behold a spectre from the past! It is the speech Louis Bonaparte made when he was elected President.'

The only words remaining in a readable condition were the following, which the trolleur read aloud in his husky brandy-drinker's voice:

'The suffrages of the nation and the oath which I have just taken command my future conduct. My duty is marked out for me. I shall fulfil that duty as a man of honour.'

'I shall recognise the enemies of my country in all those who may endeavour by unlawful means to change the Constitution, which has been established by the whole of France.'

'When Cæsar made that speech he was on the

other side of the Rubicon,’ said Ishmael; and just at this moment a man in plain clothes, who looked like a member of the police, shouldered the trolleur aside, and tore down the placard, and all other old placards on the wall.

Ishmael and his companion walked on to the rue Sombreuil. The gloomy old courtyard looked more like a stone well than ever on this dark and cheerless winter afternoon. The rain and the tramping to and fro of many feet had made the stony pavement muddy and sloppy. Rank odours of sewage, soup, and fricot pervaded house and yard.

The trolleur marched straight into his den, followed by Ishmael.

Pâquerette was sitting on a three-legged wooden stool by the fire, plucking a cabbage for the family pot-au-feu. She was much smarter than of old. She wore a bright blue stuff gown, and a coral necklace and earrings; but the small delicate face had less colour than ever, and when she started up from her low seat at the entrance of Ishmael the poor little face looked ghastly white above the red necklace and blue gown.

‘Here’s a surprise for you, my cabbage,’ cried the trolleur. ‘Mademoiselle Benoît’s friend has come to see you!’

Ishmael went across the room, and offered

Pâquerette his hand. Her slender fingers were cold as ice, and trembled in his clasp.

‘Your grandfather tells me that you are soon to be married, mademoiselle,’ he said. ‘I hope it is going to be a happy marriage.’

The girl looked first at him, and then at her grandfather, with an indescribable expression, which might mean fear, grief, shyness, anything.

‘Grandfather says so,’ she faltered, after a long pause, looking at the ground.

‘And I hope your husband that is to be is a good man.’

‘Grandfather says he is,’ she murmured, her eyes still on the ground.

‘And grandfather knows the world, my little cat,’ said the trolleur, with an exaggerated air of cheery benevolence. ‘Grandfather will not marry thee to a rogue, be sure of that. An Auvergnat, a true son of the mountain, simple, hardy, honest, a man who has prospered by patient industry, by temperance—oh, it is a beautiful thing, temperance—self-denial, perseverance, and who deserves to enjoy his prosperity with a pretty young wife to keep him company. How can a girl hope for a better husband than that? If he had been made expressly for her he could not be more suitable. And how he adores her! why, the very ground she

walks upon is sacred in his eyes. And how generous too. Look at her new gown—his gift; her earrings, her necklace—his gifts. Not an evening passes that he does not bring us something nice for supper. Such *rigolades* as we have every night!’

The girl said not a word, made no protest against her grandfather’s fine talk. She was content to wear the Charabia’s gifts; and doubtless she was prepared to accept him as a husband.

The grandmother came in from market, bringing a piece of beef for the *pot-au-feu*, while Ishmael lingered. She too was in excellent spirits. She had loitered in the streets to hear what was said about this *petit bout de révolte*. She had gone as far as the Morgue with the crowd, who accompanied the slain conscript in his journey from the hospital to the dead-house. ‘*Pauvre Piou-piou,*’ she said, wiping away a tear. Monsieur Baudin was to remain at the hospital till his friends came to fetch him. She had been told that he made a beautiful corpse, calm as one who slept.

Ishmael turned from her with a feeling of disgust. Was this the mighty heart of Saint-Antoine? Was this all that was left of the burning patriotism of ’48?—this spirit of idle curiosity, of gossip, of indifference to all the loftier aspects of a great national struggle, the everlasting conflict of might against right.

He was still more disheartened and disgusted by his brief interview with Pâquerette. The girl looked weak and foolish, a creature born to be a slave, fit for nothing better than to be sold to the highest bidder. That coral necklace reminded him of a halter. He had seen a young heifer in the market-place at Dol with just that meek, foolish air, waiting for the butcher who was to buy her.

Ishmael went from the faubourg Saint-Antoine to the neighbourhood of the markets, under the shadow of that mighty sixteenth-century church, which stands where once rose the Temple of Cybele. Here he found more excitement, more emotion than in the region of the Bastille. Barricades, or sketches of barricades, were being raised in several streets ; but there was a want of animation and a want of unanimity. The artist classes, the thinkers, the dreamers, were roused and ready for action ; but the masses had not caught fire. There were leading spirits among the workmen's clubs who were as enthusiastic and as eager for the struggle as the senators of the Left, with Victor Hugo at their head ; but the ruck, he thousands whose strong arms might have stemmed the bloody tide of the *coup d'État*, hung back. The mighty voice of the multitude was silent. The working-men of Paris, grown prudent

with prosperity, shrank from the risk of the conflict, and left their interests, rights, liberties, independence, to be fought for and bled for by a handful of patriots.

Late into the night of December the third those patriots were assembled in a house in the rue Richelieu. Ishmael and two or three other workmen guarded the door of their council room, ready to die in defence of those faithful tribunes of the people. On the boulevards, at the Bourse, among the loungers and saunterers in broadcloth and fine linen, the *coup d'État* was taken lightly enough on this third day of December. The Assembly had been somewhat roughly dissolved; but who cared for the fate of an Assembly which was eminently unpopular? There is a large class in Paris which regards politics as a kind of joke—a subject for calembours and epigrams: a very large class who would as soon serve Peter as Paul, provided trade be brisk, and the favourite theatre subsidized, the chosen haunts of the gandin and the lorette maintained in all their agreeableness at the public cost. The desire of the Parisian multitude is for *panem et circenses*: and why fight and die on barricades in defence of an abstraction which dreamers and Socialists rave about by the name of Liberty, and which never

yet put a good coat on a man's back, or a piece of beef in his pot-au-feu.

In such a temper as this rose the majority of the Parisians on the morning of the fourth; after a long winter night which had been not without its anxieties at the Elysée, where the lights in the President's study, the shadows of intent and eager figures flitting across the blind, told of discussions, disputes, uncertainties; and where it has been said that travelling carriages and horses waited in the stable-yard, ready at a minute's notice to whisk the Prince and his friends out of Paris, on the first stage of the long, flat road to the Belgian frontier.

The fourth of December began, quietly enough everywhere, with a disheartening quietude for the chiefs of the Mountain, weary with futile wavings of the torch of Liberty, beginning to despair of their fellow-man as a feeble hound which, perhaps after all, has an instinctive preference for the leash—a liking for being fed, and legislated for, and watched and tended by a paternal government, as supinely submissive to authority as a child in a mother's lap.

Before noon there were a good many barricades in that network of streets around Saint-Eustache. In the rue Montorgueil, the rue du Petit-Carreau, the rue du Cadran, and in other streets of the same

quarter, the paving-stones had been plucked up and built into barricades, mixed with empty barrels, beams taken from houses in the progress of demolition; great alterations were going on in this quarter, which was a place of change and confusion just now. The roadway yawned with pitfalls—hollows from which the stones had been dug out. There had been a good deal of rain, and in many places the streets were knee-deep in mud and slush. There had been fighting on the barricades, but not much before afternoon; there had been some deaths, but not many. The soldiers were picketted under the shadow of Saint-Eustache.

On the boulevards all was calm. The idle classes had come out to see the fun; husbands and wives, fathers and sons; family groups looking on at what seemed to be a little puff of revolutionary fire, a faint stirring of deep waters; nothing to cause terror.

Towards three o'clock a change came over the scene. From end to end the boulevards were choked with soldiers; line regiments, gendarmerie, brigades, cavalry; a battery of four guns pointing shot and shell against the barricade in the rue Saint-Denis, which had been valiantly defended all day. The long, broad avenue—the lounging place, the forum of Paris—was crowded with armed

men,—armed men evidently considerably the worse for strong drink,—a fact which furnished no little amusement to the Parisians who were walking up and down the muddy pavements, enjoying the bustle and movement of the scene, or looking down from the balconies at the crowd below.

Suddenly (the soldiers all in marching order facing the gate of Saint-Denis) a single shot was fired: ‘from the roof of a house in the rue du Sentier,’ said some; ‘from a soldier in the middle of one of the battalions, who fired in the air,’ said others: and in an instant, as at an expected signal, the troops changed front, and then burst from the head of the column a running fire which extended through the ranks and flashed along the boulevard like an arrow of flame. Men, women, and children fled, or flung themselves flat upon the ground before that hailstorm of bullets. Windows, shutters, were closed in the wildest haste. But the harvest of dead and dying was not the less rich. A child playing by a fountain—an old man of eighty—a woman with an infant in her arms, clasped close against her breast even in death; the old, the middle-aged, the young; the harmless, inoffensive population: here a bookseller on the threshold of his shop, there the *marchand de coco*, with his shining tin

fountain. Gray hairs, childhood, womanhood—none were exempt from the slaughter. Those who escaped the bullet were sabred as they fell helpless at the feet of their murderers. Nothing less than the madness of strong drink could account for the ferocity of the soldiers during that hideous quarter of an hour when, in the open street, under the light of day, the horrors of St. Bartholomew's Eve were repeated before the eyes of an astonished populace, every member of which might be one moment a spectator and in the next a victim of the attack.

Dismal spectacle when there came a lull in the fusillade, and the inhabitants of the boulevards and the adjoining streets crept out of their doors to gather up the wounded and the dying, whom none had hitherto dared to succour. The *marchand de coco* was lying in a corner by the wall, his white apron over his face, his glittering fountain on the ground beside him. He had come out hoping to do a brisk trade among the idlers on the boulevard, and the harvest he had gathered was death. Not far off lay an old man grasping an umbrella, his only defensive weapon; and a little way farther a young *flâneur*, with his scarcely-extinguished cigar between his lips, seemed still to smile with the half-amused

expression of the fashionable pessimist, for whom all the gravest questions in life have their farcical aspect.

Not far from the spot where lay youth, hope, birth, education, dressed in broadcloth, and come suddenly to a dead stop, like a watch whose wheels have run down, there lay—rolled in the gutter, blood-stained, mud-stained, with glassy eyes gazing up at the darkening winter sky, in the fixed stare of death—age, poverty, disrepute, intemperance, idleness, vagabondage, all personified in Père Lemoine, the trolleur, who had wandered far afield this December afternoon in quest of excitement, curious to see what was going on upon the boulevards, and full of unholy gaiety, pleased to mix in a row, fearing no evil to himself from civilian or soldier, safe in his insignificance, looking on with his half-drunken cynical air, caring neither for Peter nor Paul. And in this idle humour, without a moment's warning, with the first flash of arrowy flame from the muskets of the front rank, death had surprised him. Struck down by that leaden rain, like an ear of corn laid in a hailstorm, he fell and rolled over and over into the gutter. There was no one to see him fall. He was carried off to the Morgue with a large batch of other corpses some

hours later, there to await the attention of his friends.

Those on the barricades yonder, under the shadow of Saint-Eustache, were not slow to hear of the carnage. They had heard the fusillade, and took it at first for a triumphant salvo at the capitulation of the great barricade by Saint-Denis; but there was a perpetual going and coming of patriots, and the particulars of the massacre were soon known in the neighbourhood of the markets. The barricades were numerous enough to make this central point a kind of citadel. Barricades in the rue du Cadran, a barricade at each end of the rue du Petit-Carreau, five in the rue Montorgueil. Here and there an ambulance in an uninhabited house, or an empty cellar,—an ambulance consisting of two or three straw mattresses, an old woman as nurse and surgeon, and a child to make *charpie*.

The loftiest and strongest of these barricades of the rue Montorgueil was well manned by about forty Reds, mostly of the professional classes, some who dug up the paving stones and helped in the construction of the barricade with gloved hands. There were only a few workmen among them, and those were the élite of the working class. It was here that Ishmael had cast in his lot,

after fighting gallantly in the faubourg Saint-Martin all the morning. It was he whose quick eye had seen the advantages of this position, guarded as it was by two other barricades, which made it a kind of citadel. His powerful arms had done good service within the last hour, digging up paving stones, carrying huge beams from a house in process of demolition hard by, rolling empty hogsheads from a cooper's yard near, to be filled with stones for the base of the fortification. The barricade had a formidable look as it loomed, huge in the dusk of evening, across the narrow street.

They were joined presently by some fugitives from the boulevard, maddened by the massacre, wild for revenge. These told the story of the slaughter. One of them, who lived hard by, ran back to his house, and returned with a tin barrel full of cartridges.

Darkness closed round them while they were still at work. They had told off twenty of their force, now swollen to a round fifty, for outpost duty. The soldiers were close at hand. A gleaming red light, shining now and again above the crowded roofs towards the markets, showed where the troops were holding their bivouac, drunk with blood and brandy. Sometimes the hoarse shout of a drinking song—the wild laughter of that

armed multitude, came in a brief gust of sound across the housetops. They were merry yonder after the carnage. The bivouac had become an orgy.

There was method in this madness, though, which the faithful souls on the barricades knew not—a deadly method. The men were drunk, but their commanders were still sober and clear-headed; and the troops were being drawn into a circle round that citadel of revolution; a belt of iron and fire.

Deep darkness fell over the city like a pall—the darkness of a December night, moonless, starless, the atmosphere thick with rain. Every lamp was broken in this quarter of Paris, the gas-pipes were cut, not a shop was open except a couple of wine-shops at which the insurgents refreshed themselves now and then with a draught of water just reddened with thin wine. While the arm of authority was maddened with drink, revolt kept sober.

Presently, through the darkness and mud and slush, a man approached the barricade. He was a well-known member of the Assembly, a staunch Republican. With his tri-coloured scarf showing even in the darkness, he offered himself to the men on the barricade as their captain, the re-

presentative of the rights of the people, and he was welcomed with a cry of 'Vive la République!'

Ishmael stood next him on the barricade, waiting for the attack.

They waited for more than an hour. Again and again they saw the flare of the watch-fires red above the housetops; again and again they heard the roar of the bivouac. They sat down upon the stones and waited, listening, expectant. On the right, on the left, behind them, in front of them, on every side at once, a hoarse dull sound, growing with every moment more distinct and sonorous, came towards them through the darkness of night. It was the march of battalions, the sound of trumpets in the surrounding streets.

They heard, yet for the most part were of opinion that there would be no attack till next morning. Night combats are rare in street warfare. They are of all conflicts the most hazardous. But the more experienced of the insurgents saw unmistakable signs of an immediate assault.

At half-past ten there came the sound of movement in the direction of the markets. The troops were on the move. Then came the clamour of voices, the sound of file-firing; then silence; and then again the fusillade, the roar of voices

and clash of arms. One by one the barricades yonder were being taken.

Between Ishmael's barricade and the troops there was a double barricade in the Rue Mauconseil, a veritable redoubt, poorly, but bravely manned. Here the fight was brief but desperate. The insurgents husbanded their ammunition, fired with deliberate aim through the crevices of the stone-work, and decimated their foes. But the conflict was only a question of minutes; the few succumbed to the many, and the soldiers, maddened by the loss of their comrades and the desperate resistance of the foe, leapt upon the barricade, sabring and shooting right and left of them, trampling the corpses under foot.

And now the troops were in front of Ishmael's barricade, the last point of resistance, the strongest and best manned. The combat began: ruthless, devilish on the part of the State: desperate, despairing on the part of the Republic. The odds against the Reds were overwhelming. Four companies poured from the surrounding streets, and from the vanquished barricades, concentrating their strength upon this ultimate struggle. In a serried mass, terrible, invincible, they rolled onward like a living flood, and flung themselves against the barricade.

It was horrible. They fought hand to hand, four hundred against fifty. They seized each other by the throat, by the hair. Not a cartridge was left on the barricade; but there was still the strength of despair. A workman, pierced through the body, plucked the bayonet from his side and slew a soldier with the bloody point. The street was hidden in the smoke of the guns. In the thick darkness, in the stifling stench of gunpowder, the foes flung themselves against each other, and fought like demons in the pit of hell.

The barricade hardly held two minutes; the insurgents fell on every side. Ishmael, wounded on the forehead, blinded with the blood that streamed into his eyes, found himself flung against the side of a house at the edge of the barricade. Stunned, dazed for a moment or two, he leant against the brick wall, his head swimming, his senses leaving him, hearing oaths, groans, gun-shots, dimly as in a dream.

Suddenly something hit him sharply on the head; a loud whisper from above said, 'Climb up here—your only chance of escape.'

The barricade was taken; the troops were slaughtering right and left; faint voices of dying men gasped 'Vive la République.'

‘No prisoners!’ cried the general in command; in other words, no quarter.

The thing which had struck Ishmael was the knotted end of a rope.

‘Climb, fool!’ whispered the voice above.

He slipped his arm through the noose mechanically, and in the thick darkness began to scale the wall. He was faint from loss of blood; exhausted by the day’s fighting; worn out with sleepless nights; but his old boyish habits made the scaling of the wall an easy matter. He climbed from window-ledge to window-ledge, while the bullets rained round him, one grazing his leg as he mounted. On the second story there was a glimmer of light behind a half-closed shutter; the shutter opened a little wider as he neared the point. An arm was stretched out, a hand caught hold of his coat, and giddy, half-unconscious, he flung himself through the open window, and fell fainting on the floor.

‘One life gained from the carnage!’ said a voice above him; ‘I have done a better night’s work than if I had been on the barricade.’

CHAPTER XIII.

‘THE BREAKER HAS COME UP BEFORE THEM.’

WHEN Ishmael came to his right mind, the *coup d'État* was an accomplished fact. Prince Louis Napoleon was master of Paris and the Parisians, and, with that central force which explodes or holds together the orb of the nation, he was also master of France. The storm was over. The State prisoners, cramped in their narrow cells, fed on black bread and greasy soup—generals, journalists, deputies of all colours and classes, treated with all the ignominy which is the common lot of the commonest felons, huddled and hustled into prison vans, and carried off to the Havre station on the first stage to Cayenne—and those other generals eating their hearts out at Ham—these may have felt the inconveniences and discomforts which attend a sudden and dramatic change, a too rapid swinging round of the State vessel; but Paris in general woke with a smile, and sunned itself in

the balmy atmosphere of halcyon days, the calm which follows storm.

Dark and terrible stories have been written of bloody reprisals which followed that brief revolt of unarmed patriotism against armed power, of the few against the thousands—stories written by the stainless hand of poet and patriot—stories of wholesale massacres in the dead of the night, of hundreds shot down like sheep, of gutters running blood. Many and many a night the Parisians on the boulevard, dancing, dining, happy and secure in the curtained warmth of peaceful homes, heard the roll of the prison vans in the street below: but as the newspapers had formally announced that no more felons would be sent to the galleys, and that transportation would be henceforth the sole punishment for crime, that dismal sound of the heavy van-wheels thundering over the asphalte made very little impression.

‘Another gang of felons going to Cayenne!’ said Society, with a careless shrug.

One shudders to read those awful histories; one shrinks from looking down into that dark gulf.

To those who have been happy in Paris under that paternal Government—who have seen

the brightness of her peaceful streets, the prosperity of her population, her nobly organised charities, her sagacious forethought for the welfare of her obscurest citizens, her foul places cleared away, her palaces girdled with parks and gardens, her talents encouraged, her greatness of past or present interwoven as an ever-living memory in the names of her streets, and squares, and fountains, and gateways; to those who have loved Imperial Paris in the days of their youth, who recall the countenance of her Emperor almost as the face of a friend, the loveliness of her Empress as a part of the poetry of life:—to such as these it is an acute pain to look back upon those dark days of December, and to acknowledge that behind all the brightness and the beauty, the wisdom, the benevolence, the real honest love of mankind, there is this one dark ineffaceable blot.

It was the evening of the fifth when Ishmael, who had been delirious all night and all day from the effects of a severe sabre wound upon his head, emerged from a world of hideous shadows, and recovered a dim consciousness of the realities around him.

He was lying on a bed in an alcove, an old-

fashioned bedstead, shaped like a sarcophagus, all rosewood and tarnished gilding, after the style of the First Empire. The room was low, but of a tolerable size, with two casement windows. Near the stove under the chimney-piece stood a round table, and on the table a reading lamp. The table was covered with a confusion of papers, books, pamphlets, all heaped upon one another pell-mell; and an open secretaire against the wall, was chokeful of the same litter; manuscripts, books in yellow-paper covers, books in smart bindings, books in shabby bindings, stuffed in anyhow, one on the top of the other, sideways, longways, endways; a row of pigeon-holes gorged with papers in the background. Half buried in a deep *bergère* beside the table—an armchair almost as big as a bedstead—lollèd a young man, delicate of feature, and, although not actually handsome, having a certain air of elegance, a distinction and a grace which had more than the charm of beauty. His dress was to the last degree Bohemian: loose duck trousers, a shabby brown velveteen shooting coat, a pair of red morocco slippers trodden down at the heel, a Byron collar, and no necktie. He was of about the middle height, slim, fair, with light brown hair and moustache, and large dreamy blue eyes—eyes which reminded Ishmael of other

eyes, those large ensive blue eyes of Pâquerette's, looking at him the day before yesterday, with a vague piteousness, as of a little child in distress.

Ishmael looked round the room wonderingly, noting every object; until his gaze finally fixed itself on the young man in the armchair, lolling luxuriously with feet as high as his head, lazily puffing a German pipe, and staring up at the ceiling.

'Where am I? and how did I come here?' faltered Ishmael, after a prolonged scrutiny. He was so weak that it cost him some effort to shape these two questions.

'You came here hanging on to a rope, through one of those windows,' answered his host quietly. 'You came here from the jaws of death; for hardly half-a-dozen of the men who fought on that last barricade survived the struggle. Three of them were finished off by the soldiers in the Passage Saumon, shot down like dogs, after they had climbed the iron gates for sanctuary. That was *un peu raide*. As for your whereabouts, you are on a second floor in the rue Montorgueil, the guest of Hector de Valnois, journalist, farce-writer, poet, philosopher, socialist, but not much, metaphysician, profound thinker, critic most of all; and you are welcome to remain here till you have

a sound skull, and can leave the premises without fear of the police, or of the soldiers, who have had orders to search the houses in the Insurgent quarters and to shoot any individual who cannot show that he is an inhabitant of the house in which they find him. Any man found carrying arms is to be shot. I have been expecting a visit from those gentlemen at any moment for the last three-and-twenty hours; but, as they have not come yet, I fancy you have given them the slip, and that in the pitch-darkness of last night nobody saw your wonderful ascent at a rope's end. Happily for you, I have the reputation of being an *Aristo*, and detesting everything republican; so my apartment is a pretty secure sanctuary. And now take a pull at this Medoc, and when you feel equal to the exertion you can tell me who you are.'

He half filled a tumbler with wine and handed it to Ishmael, who drank it eagerly, his lips and throat parched with fever.

'The barricade was taken!' he gasped: 'yes, I know that. And those brave fellows were all slaughtered: but was that the end? is the struggle over? is there no one more to fight for the rights of the people — the Charter, the Constitution?'

‘The Constitution, bah!’ exclaimed Valnois contemptuously; ‘what is the constitution worth that a man should shed his blood for it—or any other abstract noun of the same kind—liberty—equality—fraternity—rights of the people. No, my friend, such things never were worth such carnage as this street saw yesterday, brothers shedding brothers’ blood. But it is all over. The men of the Mountain are fugitives or prisoners, Paris has returned to her accustomed tranquillity, the troops have gone back to their barracks, and Louis Bonaparte is master of the situation. He has made a clean sweep of a particularly unpopular Assembly, and he holds the destinies of France in the hollow of his hand. He has abolished the obnoxious law of May, which deprived two-thirds of the people of their right to vote, by requiring that every voter should have been domiciled for three years in his Commune. He has restored universal suffrage under the fascinating form of the plebiscite, by which the people of France are to vote Yes or No, whether they will or will not have him for their sole and uncontrolled master during the next ten years. But, as every vote will be recorded, the malcontents had better reckon the odds against them before they vote on

the wrong side. The man who says No may be a marked man in the days to come.'

'You will not submit to the rule of a usurper? to power snatched from an unwilling people at the point of a sword?'

'My dear fellow, I am one of that vast majority of Frenchmen who would as soon serve Peter as Paul. And for the unwillingness—why, the struggle of the last two days must have shown you that the President's clutch at the sceptre was not nearly such an unpopular move as you handful of Reds think. Paris wants to be governed peaceably, and would rather be ruled by one long-headed man with a lot of deuced knowing fellows about him, than by an Assembly of conceited idiots all pulling different ways. And now, my good friend, I'll give you a fresh bandage for your head; and if you feel equal to the exertion you can tell me all about yourself while I'm putting it on. A medical friend of mine was in here this morning, and got me a lotion for your wound, which he says will heal quickly on account of your superb *physique*. It would have been a very different matter if any one had cut open my head, he told me. Constitution feeble, habits dissipated: that is my *renseignement*.'

‘You are very good,’ murmured Ishmael, while Valnois was removing the old bandage and adjusting the new one, with fingers as light and delicate as those of a woman; ‘you have saved my life—saved me from being cut to pieces by those hell-hounds of drunken soldiers; and although I am hardly strong enough to thank you properly I am not the less grateful. I am a workman, a mason.’

‘A workman! Come, that won’t do,’ said Valnois. ‘You wore a blouse by way of disguise; you were on the side of the blouses, and the costume was convenient.’

‘I have told you the plain truth. I have been earning my bread in Paris for more than a year. I began as a *gâcheur*, and I am now a *limousinant*, and can earn from thirty to forty francs a week. I look forward to the time when I may be able to set up as a master-builder in a humble way, perhaps to buy an odd bit of land here or there, beyond the exterior boulevards, and to build a few houses for men of my own class, houses that shall be a good deal better than the dens that most of them herd and hugger-mugger in now.’

‘I see you are ambitious,’ said Valnois, throwing away the end of his cigar, and looking

at the face on the pillow with a half-serious, half-humorous expression; 'and you are saving money—saving money from the profits of your own labour. Let me have a good look at you, my friend; let me see what kind of an animal it is which works every day in the week and saves a part of every week's wages. I have read of the species in Eugène Sue, but I never quite believed in such a type—out of a socialist's novel.'

'Why should not a workman have his dreams as well as a poet?' asked Ishmael.

'Ah, why not, indeed! If his dreams reach no better fulfilment than the dreams of the poet, heaven help him. I am a poet, I who speak to you, and I have had my dream, which has landed me in the gutter. What is your name, friend?'

'Ishmael.'

'Ishmael! *tout court*. *Quel drôle de nom!* I see—*sobriquet* of hazard, or of your own choosing. Ishmael: no surname, only Ishmael: which makes me all the more certain of what I saw from the first, that you are a gentleman, and not a workman.'

'I am a journeyman mason, as you may find out for yourself any day if you take the trouble to inquire about me at Belleville, or Ménilmontant.

But I am so much your debtor that I should have no reserve with you, and I am quite ready to tell you my history, if you care to hear it.'

'I am full of curiosity. I have one of those little minds which feed upon trifles, and I am particularly interested in you, because you represent the one Christian-like act of my existence. I never played the good Samaritan before last night.'

'And yet the part sits upon you as easily as if it were in your very nature,' said Ishmael; and then in briefest, simplest phrases, he told his new friend the story of his life from the time of his father's second marriage.

Of his mother's dark fate, or his own childish life in Paris, he said not a word.

'Upon my soul, you are about the only wise man of my acquaintance,' exclaimed Hector de Valnois, who had listened with unfaltering attention to every word of Ishmael's story. 'Any other young fellow in your position would have come to Paris with the idea of earning his living in *gris-perle* gloves, would have tried first to be a poet, then a novelist, then a playwright, then a pamphleteer, then a tutor in a day-school, then perhaps a drudge at an office where they copy plays—deepest sink of poverty and degradation—

a place where shirtless wretches in ragged coats herd together in some foul den, like dogs in a kennel, in the hope that by being on the premises day and night they may get the first chance of any work that has to be done against time. For the man who wants to wear kid gloves and lounge on the boulevard, and who thinks he can earn his bread *en passant*, there is a gradual inevitable down-hill road, every stage of which I have trodden. Yes, my friend, I have sounded the bottom of this gulf of Paris; but happily I had elasticity enough to surge up again on the wave of fortune. Heaven knows how long I may remain on the breast of the waters. There are men who, when once they sink, never rise again: men who one day leave off wearing linen and rying to live honestly, and who from that hour gravitate towards the galleys, or the guillotine.’

‘Perhaps if I had had a little more book-learning I might have tried to earn my bread in a manner more becoming my race,’ answered Ishmael; ‘but as I was much cleverer with my hands than with my head, I made up my mind that my hands would have to keep me; and so far they have earned enough for my wants.’

‘And enough for you to save money; wonderful man!’ said Valnois, lazily puffing at his

pipe, and smiling with a superior air upon his new friend.

He wondered at the force of character, the dogged perseverance, the temperance and prudence of a man who could work six days a week at a laborious trade, and put by half his earnings.

Yet it seemed to him a lower order of intellect, an inferior kind of clay which could do these things. Poets, wits, geniuses, are made in a different mould. For them these sordid details, these petty daily sacrifices are impossible.

‘What should I do with six francs a day?’ asked Ishmael simply. ‘I care very little what I eat, and so far I have been able to live without drinking, as many of my fellow workmen drink. My lodging costs me less than half a franc a day. I used to give more than that for a dirty *garni*, but now I have my own furniture, and a clean airy room for three francs a week. I can live upon a franc a day, and the rest is left for books, clothes, and a trifle every week to put in the savings bank.’

‘Miraculous! And I got fifteen hundred francs six weeks ago for my share in a vaudeville at the Palais Royal. *Comment on fait la noce*. And I have only one louis and a handful of silver left this evening.’

Ishmael stayed three days and nights in the rue Montorgueil, long enough to make him very intimate with a young man of Hector de Valnois’ frank, easy temper. De Valnois had that half-boyish, half *petit-maitre* vanity which is prouder of small vices than other men are of great virtues. He was the true type of Parisian *boulevardier*; dandy, Bohemian, very indifferent as to the company he kept, but very particular as to the cut of his coat, the colour and quality of his gloves. He could go without a dinner, he could sink now and again to the obscurity of a cheap restaurant on the left bank of the Seine; but at Philippe’s, or the Maison-Dorée, Véfours, or the Trois Frères, there was no guest more critical or more imperious. His habits were desultory. He worked while other men slept, and slept while all the world was at work. He abandoned himself to long intervals of absolute idleness, which he called his periods of incubation. And then, when the purse was empty, and hunger—absolute, uncompromising hunger—began to pinch the poet’s inside, he would take out a quire of paper and write for twenty hours at a stretch, like a maniac, producing something which varied extraordinarily in quality and style—a one-act farce, an article for the ‘Revue

des Deux Mondes,' a *feuilleton* for the 'Figaro,' criticism, verse, sentiment, satire—but something which was generally worth money, and which he immediately exchanged for that prime necessity of life. Of course publishers and managers profited by his folly, and paid him less than they would have paid a wiser man.

Valnois knew this, but accepted the fact as an inevitable consequence of taking life pleasantly. His life, such as it was, suited his temperament better than a better life could have done. He had youth, gaiety, good looks, a crowd of friends in the present. He was the only son of a man of noble family and diminished means, and was heir to a much impoverished estate in the vicinity of Nîmes, which seemed to him like an assured fortune in the future.

Before he had spent a third night in the rue Montorgueil, Ishmael found out that Valnois had given him his own and only bed, and had been content to spend the night in an easy chair. This sacrifice the hardy mason refused to permit any longer; and on the third and fourth night of his visit he slept rolled in a blanket, and stretched in front of the fireplace.

On the fifth morning his head was sound enough to dispense with the disfiguring and

suspicious bandage ; and the giddiness caused by his wound had passed away. His blood-bespattered blouse had been washed by the porter's wife, and there was nothing in his appearance to mark him as one of the insurgents. He left the rue Montorgueil before seven o'clock, in the cold gray morning, after thanking de Valnois heartily for his hospitality.

'Come and see me any afternoon that you can spare an hour,' said Valnois ; 'I am generally out after dusk, but till dusk the chances are you will find me in my den. I like star-shine and the blue night - sky better than the cold glare of day. I like my Paris when all her shabbiness and dilapidations are hidden, and she has the air of a fairy city, a place of lamp-light and mirth, music and movement.'

'You will not care to see me again,' murmured Ishmael shyly : 'I wear a blouse, and work among other blouses.'

'I admire your blouse, and I respect you. Come as often as you like ; you will never find me ashamed of your blouse. If I have any political creed at all my colour is distinctly red. I admire the working-man and the aristocrat ; the first the horny-handed toiler without whom society must cease to exist, and civilization stop like a

watch with a broken main-spring; the second the fine flower of fashion and high birth. It is your middle-class—your *épicier*—your Philistine, that I detest.’

On this they parted, firm friends, albeit Ishmael, the son of toil, felt a kind of shyness in his association with the brain-worker, the man whose varied collection of books in three or four different languages indicated a degree of literary culture which was a new thing to Count Caradec’s son. To know a little Latin and less Greek was the Count’s idea of a gentleman’s education, and he had reproached his son for not having properly mastered *ses rudiments*. But here was a youth living on a second floor in an obscure street, who was steeped in German philosophy and poetry, who could read Cervantes and Lope de Vega in the original, and had the gems of the Divine Comedy on the tip of his tongue. Was it not an honour and a privilege for the *limousinant* of Belleville to call such a man his friend?

Ishmael looked about him wonderingly in the gray of the early winter morning, as he made his way towards the markets, and the rue Saint-Antoine. He had expected to see traces of violence and slaughter upon every side; but the broken lamps and shattered windows of the rue

Montorgueil alone told of the brief sharp struggle four days ago. Paris had her old air of brisk movement—the *grisettes* and workmen trudging to their workshops, their laundries, and the clerks hurrying to their offices—the heavy waggons rumbling by to the markets—and all the atmosphere in these narrow streets by Saint-Eustache laden with odours of garden stuff and *charcuterie*, sea-fish and river-fish, butchers’ meat and poultry.

Ishmael had taken the direction of the place de la Bastille, with the idea of looking in for a minute or so at that dingy ground-floor den in the rue Sombreuil, just to see how it had fared with Pâquerette and her people on the terrible night of the fourth. He knew not how quiet the faubourg Saint-Antoine had been, while the heart of Paris was throbbing so stormily, beating itself to death yonder by the markets. It seemed to him that Saint-Antoine, renowned of old, could hardly have preserved a sluggish neutrality till the very end. The sleeping lion must have been aroused from his dull lethargy by the noise of that massacre on the boulevard.

He found a little crowd hanging about the archway leading into the quadrangular yard—a little crowd of outcast boys, some women of the rag-picker species from the rue Sainte Marguerite,

two or three *grisettes*, a fat man in a white apron from a porkbutcher's shop round the corner; and on inquiring the cause of this unusual excitement, he was told that there was a funeral coming out presently—the old *pochard* of the ground floor had gone to thank his baker. Père Lemoine, the *trolleur*, was to be buried that morning.

‘Père Lemoine dead!’ exclaimed Ishmael. ‘Then there was more fighting here on the fourth, I suppose—more barricades?’

‘*Pas si bête*,’ said the porkbutcher; ‘we are all for the Prince Louis Napoleon, a clever man, who will make trade good in Paris, and who ought to be Emperor. What do we want with barricades? Père Lemoine went farther afield to get his number. He was amongst those curious folks who insisted upon being out on the boulevards, although they were warned by the President’s placards that wise people were to keep safe and snug within doors. And now he is going to eat dandelions by the roots in the cemetery yonder.’

‘But there were those who stayed at home and were shot in their own houses,’ grumbled one of the old women. ‘The soldiers fired in at the windows, little children were killed in their

mothers’ arms. There was never such a thing in Paris before.’

Ishmael passed in among the crowd, and went across the yard to Père Lemoine’s lodging. The hearse was standing before the door, the shabby public carriage in which the *trolleur* was to take his last ride to the place of pauper graves in the great graveyard at the end of the Rue de la Roquette, just beyond the jail and the scaffold—the prison-houses of the dead hard by the prison-house of the living. The undertaker and his two men were in the darksome bedchamber at the back, nailing down the coffin, while Mère Lemoine and Pâquerette, dressed in shabbiest black, second, or perhaps third-hand mourning, bought from the merchant of frippery in the Temple, sat on each side of the door, waiting to take their places in the procession, the old woman weeping audibly, and with red swollen eyelids and drawn-down lips; Pâquerette pale as the very dead, but with dry eyes.

There were a bottle of bright yellow fluid, half-a-dozen glasses, and a dish of sweet biscuits on the table, by which the Auvergnat was standing, with a glass in his hand, ready to offer hospitality to any neighbour who came in. He and the two women were to be the only

followers of that sable carriage yonder. He had brought a wreath of yellow *immortelles* to lay on his old employer's coffin.

Ishmael shook hands with Mère Lemoine, and murmured a few kind words; whereupon the fountain of tears flowed still faster, and in a voice broken by whimpers the old woman told him how she and Pâquerette had sat up all night on the fourth, waiting for the patron to come home; and how when they heard next morning of the fusillade on the boulevard, their first thought had been to go all over that part of Paris hunting for the missing Père—to go even to the Elysée itself, if need were, to demand his blood of the President, or to St. Arnaud to ask what the soldiers had done with an honest man, who had never harmed any one in his life. And then the Charabia had suggested that he should first go to the Morgue, and see, if by evil fate, this poor soul were lying on the cold stones there, under the little fountain of icy water—unclaimed, unknown; and he had gone, and he had found his old friend, with a dreadful wound upon his jaw, and shot through the lungs; and he had brought him home; and it was he who was to pay for the grand cloth-covered coffin with its white metal furniture, for Pâquerette's sake.

The Charabia nodded assent with a friendly air, and offered Ishmael a glass of brandy, which was refused. Pâquerette said not a word. She had hardly lifted up her eyes since Ishmael entered. She sat looking down at the skirt of her rusty black gown—pallid, motionless, expressionless, like a creature without thought or feeling,

'Do you know how he came by his death?' asked Ishmael.

'Only that he was among those who were picked up on the boulevard after the fusillade,' answered the old woman. 'Some say that shots were fired at the soldiers from the roof of a house, and that they were maddened by the idea that they were all going to be shot down by the people, and that they turned upon the crowd and fired, without orders from any officer in command.'

'They were drunk,' said the Charabia; 'they were all drunk. They shot and killed for pure sport—women, old men, children—aiming at them as if they had been sparrows, betting on their shots, as in a billiard-room. It was fine sport; and this time it was chiefly the *bourgeois*, the folks who wear broadcloth and fine linen, who suffered. It was a grim spectacle to see the well-dressed corpses lying in the gutters. Père

Lemoine had no business there. I am sorry for him. He has swallowed his spoon sooner than he need, poor devil.'

'Shall I walk to the cemetery with you?' asked Ishmael, an offer which was promptly accepted by Madame Lemoine. That would make them four instead of three, and the Charabia could walk with Pâquerette, which was only right. And now the coffin was brought out and placed upon the bier, and covered with the rusty velvet pall; and the funeral train of four followed the hearse out of the muddy yard into the muddier street.

Ishmael, having offered his company out of pure kindness, was content to walk beside Mère Lemoine, albeit she dragged her slippers along the greasy stones, and was obviously illuminated. She expatiated on the merits of the deceased, deprecated while admitting, his faults; praised her own goodness and fidelity as wife and household-manager — with tears which flowed so freely from her inflamed eyelids and a-down her toddened cheeks, that it might have been thought that the *trois-six* she had been imbibing freely for the last four days found an outlet in this form.

Ishmael bought a votive wreath, with R.I.P

in black upon yellow, on the way to the cemetery, and laid it reverently upon the vagabond’s coffin, before it went down into the *tranchée gratuite*, a recent improvement upon the common grave ; for in these long trenches the coffins were no longer heaped one on the top of the other, but ranged decently in a row, twenty centimètres asunder. Here, until five years after the last coffin has been laid in the trench, the pauper slumbers undisturbed, as safe as the rich man in his freehold, and the cross which marks his last resting place is no longer a mockery and a fiction as it was in the days of common graves.

The funeral service of the poor is not a protracted office. Père Lemoine was laid in earth in less than twenty minutes, and it was only ten o’clock when Ishmael bade Pâquerette and her grandmother good-bye at the gate of Père Lachaise.

‘When is the wedding to be?’ he asked, as he shook hands with the old woman.

‘In a fortnight: the sooner the better. Who is there to take care of her now, poor child, since the good old grandfather is lying underground?’

CHAPTER XIV.

‘SHE IS MORE PRECIOUS THAN RUBIES.’

ISHMAEL walked slowly towards Ménilmontant after leaving the gate of the cemetery, his mind full of Pâquerette and her destiny. He had given more than one furtive glance at the Charabia during the funeral service, and he had not been favourably impressed by the man's appearance, considered in his character of bridegroom-expectant. The fellow was honest enough, perhaps; but the heavy brow, the small, dull eyes, under bushy, projecting brows, indicated a nature of the lowest order—loutish, sullen, tending almost to the savage. And by the side of this short, thick-set figure, this heavy, bull-dog visage, Pâquerette's slender form, and pale, small face looked more than ever like some white wild flower, which too rough a gust of March wind would snap from its frail stem. There was something revolting to human nature in the idea of an union between two beings so different—almost as revolting as the

idea of union between creatures of dissimilar species—wolf and lamb, vulture and dove.

And yet the thing was to be, and it was no affair of Ishmael's. Better it would seem that Pâquerette should have such a husband as this brutal Auvergnat, if he could provide her with a comfortable home, than that she should languish in that den in the rue Sombreuil, at the mercy of a drunken grandmother.

‘Let me think of my own business,’ said Ishmael, setting his face towards the yard of the master builder, his *bourgeois*, his patron, anxious to see if the *coup d’État* would make any difference in his chances of employment.

The bourgeois was on the premises, and in excellent spirits. Nothing succeeds like success: and that bold stroke of the other day had made Napoleonic rule already an established fact. The builder was Bonapartist to the tips of his nails. He talked as if these days of December were the beginning of a millennium for all France in general, for the building trade in particular.

‘Look at the empire!’ he exclaimed; ‘it was an age of activity, of colossal undertakings—bridges, canals, fountains, markets, catacombs. The Bourse, the cemeteries of Montmartre and Père Lachaise, we owe them all to the uncle: who can doubt

that the nephew will do even greater things? We live in a faster age; we can command larger resources. We shall get more bridges to build, larger markets, finer barracks, new theatres. The Prince and De Morny are two of the greatest stock-jobbers in Europe. Take my word for it, Ishmael, the age of enterprise has begun.'

There was plenty of work for Ishmael, and an advancement in his position, which he had not expected. The foreman of the works, finding things thrown out of gear by the agitations of the third and fourth, had consoled himself at the wine shops of his quarter, the *assommoirs*, or spirit-shops, which dealt in liquid fire, bright to the eye, pleasant to the jaded palate, devilish in its effect upon body and brain; for while the rich Parisian may be intemperate with impunity, the working man of Paris is supplied with a stuff called brandy in which there is not one drop of the juice of the grape, and for *him* drunkenness means madness and death. And in Paris there are twenty-five thousand drinking shops of different degrees.

In the foreman's case three days sustained upon this kind of nourishment had resulted in an attack of delirium tremens. The man was at the hospital of St. Anne; and the master had sworn a deadly oath that a servant who could so abandon

his duty at a time when there was a heavy contract on hand, should never again touch a sou of his money.

Ishmael said a good word for the foreman, who had always treated him like a brute, but who had an honest, industrious little wife and a brace of pretty children. The patron was inflexible; and Ishmael found himself promoted to the post of overseer of the other men.

Happily, he was a favourite with them all; and as the late foreman had been detested, his appointment gave universal satisfaction. He had been suspected at the beginning of things—doubted, disliked even, as a person of a different class—that most obnoxious of all beings, a gentleman in disguise. But, by degrees, his frank, straightforward bearing, his thorough truthfulness, his generosity of heart and willingness to help a fellow-workman in distress, had overcome all prejudices against him; and as time went by Ishmael had come to be a kind of king in the builder’s yard—chosen in some wise, perhaps, for his good looks and superior height—his air of physical power and vigorous health—a proud, handsome head, towering above the feebler city-bred workmen by three or four inches—chosen as Saul was chosen to be king over Israel.

His advancement to be foreman of the works

doubled his pay. He felt himself on the road to high fortune.

It was in the week that followed the *coup d'État*, while everyone was talking of the plebiscite, the probability of a second empire, and the dark rumours of a good deal of unpleasantness as it were below the surface, in the shape of transportation and exile, that Ishmael was surprised by a *rencontre* with an old acquaintance.

He had not forgotten his mother's maid Lisette, even in the excitement of his new life in Paris. He had taken a good deal of trouble in hunting for her, visiting almost every *charcutier's* shop in the outskirts of the city, but without success. He did not know the name of the man she had married; and among the ladies who devoted themselves to dealings in the varieties of pig-meat, he could hear of no one at all resembling the friend of his desolate childhood.

It happened, however, about a week after the fatal fourth of December, that Ishmael, being indisposed for his customary studious evening, went farther afield than usual for his dinner, and patronised a *tapis franc* in the region of Montmartre, and within two or three hundred yards of the theatre at which his mother and his mother's maid had been performers thirteen years before.

When he had dined he went to look at the building which had been a mystery to him in his childhood. He had seen it six months ago, out of repair, closely shut, the spurious Grecian façade plastered with bills of all kinds. To-night the composite pillars, the stuccoed portico were bright with new paint and cheap gilding, and a row of coloured lamps shone in front of the entrance. Above the cornice of the portico, in characters of flame, appeared the new name of the building ‘Palais de Cristal,’ so called after Sir Joseph Paxton’s famous palace of industry in Hyde Park, an idea which had vividly impressed the Gallic mind. The old Escorial theatre had been improved off the face of the earth, and the Palais de Cristal, a new *café-chantant*, entrance ten sous, *consommation libre*, had arisen in its place.

Ishmael paid his ten sous to a smartly-dressed matron, who occupied a counter near the entrance, and went into the auditorium. It was a long room, something like a chapel, with rows of rush-bottomed chairs and little tables, placed at intervals, on each side of a central alley. At the end, where the altar would have been in a church, there was a platform, lighted with coloured lamps, and beautified

by artificial roses and lilies in gilded vases. A grand piano occupied the centre of the platform, and on each side of the piano there were three or four arm chairs, covered with crimson velvet, for the performers.

The platform was empty, and the body of the hall was but thinly occupied when Ishmael took his seat, very near the footlights. He had to wait some time before the performance began, during which period the *élite* of the neighbourhood were dropping in, making a great noise with their boots, and a greater noise with their tongues, ordering divers refreshments of the woman at the counter, or of the waiters in the hall, disputing, laughing, squabbling about seats, rights and counter-rights. Ishmael began to think he was in a fair way to waste his evening; yet he had a fancy to see what kind of a place this was in which his mother's beauty had once shone as a star. He heard a woman telling a friend that the platform yonder, with its lamps and flowers and muslin curtains, was only the old stage upon which she had seen 'Cartouche,' and the 'Tour de Nesle' acted five years before.

And now a resplendent person in evening dress, with a white waistcoat and shining boots, entered from a curtained doorway, took his place

at the piano, and began to play *Partant pour la Syrie*, as a triumphal march, to which entered four other resplendent personages of the male sex, conducting four ladies in gorgeous raiment, who, with the air of duchesses, sank languidly into crimson fauteuils, and smiled their gracious acknowledgment of the noisy greeting of the audience, all tired of waiting, and ready to chink their teaspoons or wine glasses rapturously at the smallest provocation.

Ishmael scrutinised the painted faces, the sleek shining hair, with the eye of a hawk. Not one of those radiant creatures would ever again see her thirtieth birthday. More than one was decidedly on the wane; but painted eyelashes, rouge, and *accroche-cœur* curls are almost as good as the *beauté du diable*. At sight of one of those artistic countenances, round plump cheeks, a low forehead plastered with little rings of black hair, plump shoulders, and whitened arms, in a glistening green silk gown, the skirt an ascending scale of scalloped flounces, Ishmael gave a start which almost capsized his next neighbour's *chope* of Bavarian beer. One glance told him that the lady in green was his old friend Lisette, her beauty amplified, coarsened, perhaps, by the passage of years, but just the same kind of Lisette he had

known thirteen years ago. He wanted to go to the platform that moment and shake hands with her across the lamps and flowers; but he restrained himself, and sat waiting and watching.

There was a variety of music, which argued a catholic taste on the part of the audience. A sentimental duet about the stars and the sea was followed by a comic duet about a matrimonial quarrel; and then came a hunting song; and then the quartette from 'Rigoletto,' sung with tremendous force on the part of the soprano, until the gas-globes rattled, and the hall rang again. And when the applause after this great work had subsided, Lisette, who had been silent hitherto, came simpering to the footlights.

There was a storm of applause directly she came forward—cheers, familiar little cries and greetings, as at the appearance of an old-established favourite, who has taken root in the very hearts of her audience. She smiled round at her admirers, she curtsied, laughed, cleared her throat with a coquettish little cough, adjusted her gilt bracelets, and then, still broadly smiling, with reddened lips, she began the following masterpiece of the comic muse, as extant in Paris at the close of 1851:

'Ma future est jeune et belle,
Et f'rait l'bonheur de mes jours,

Mais son défaut, la cruelle !
C'est de s'enrhumer toujours.

'Elle s'enrhume quand il gèle,
Encor' plus quand il dégèle,
Hiver, été, frimas, brume,
Ma foi ! ce n'est qu' un long rhume.

'*Parle.* Ce n'est pas un crime, vous savez. Ce n'est ni un meurtre, ni un vol, ni un coup d'état, mais c'est embêtant, tout de même. Quand je l'emmène à Bougival, par exemple, dîner sur l'herbe, un vrai paradis l'été pres de l'eau, par un soleil à faire flamber les cheveux, eh ! bien, malgré tout, elle s'enrhume toujours !

'Et puis v'la qu'elle se mouche,
Qu'on dirait d'une tempête !
Tirant son nez en farouche,
C'est à vous rompre la tête.

'À la danse, ou quand on mange,
Même quand j'lui fais l'amour !
Célestine, adorable ange !
S'obstine à s'moucher toujours.'

When the entertainment was over, Ishmael tore a leaf out of his pocket-book, and wrote upon it, 'Will Madame Ladronette' (that was Lisette's stage name) 'speak to an old friend from Brittany, presently, at the artists' door?' This brief missive he entrusted to one of the waiters, and then he went out into the street, and found his

way to an obscure little door in an alley at the side of the Palais de Cristal.

Here Ishmael found another person in attendance—a short, stout man with a white apron tucked aside under a pilot coat.

‘Are you waiting for one of the artists, Monsieur?’ this person asked after two or three minutes, with a somewhat suspicious air.

‘I am waiting for Madame Ladronette.’

‘Indeed!’ said the stout man, with a start and a snort; ‘and may I ask what business you may have between eleven o’clock and midnight with an honourable lady like Madame Ladronette.’

‘You can ask, assuredly, when you have told me by what right you expect to be answered.’

‘By my right as Madame Ladronette’s husband, sir; I think that ought to be enough,’ retorted the other fiercely.

‘Oh, then you are the *charcutier*,’ exclaimed Ishmael, laughing.

‘Yes, sir, I am the *charcutier*; I hope you do not consider that a dishonourable trade?’

‘Sir, it is at once respectable and useful,’ answered Ishmael gravely; ‘and as you have established your right to know my business with Lisette—Madame Ladronette I should say—I am pleased

to tell you that, although you see me to-night a great hulking fellow of over six feet high, I was once small, friendless, helpless, unhappy, and that in those days your wife was very kind to me.’

‘She has a heart large enough to be kind to the universe,’ said the *charcutier*, who was a pompous little man, and had an air of swelling as he spoke, as if literally puffed up by his own conceit. ‘But here she comes to answer for herself.’

Lisette emerged from the greasy little swing door, neatly and even fashionably clad in a large cashmere shawl, which reached almost to her heels a black velvet bonnet, and a thick lace veil. She went up to Ishmael, who was standing in the light of the lamp over the door, and looked at him intently for a few moments, and then she said:

‘It is Count Caradec’s face, only handsomer! Surely you are not——’

‘I was once Sébastien Caradec, the little boy you used to take out walking in Paris years ago; but I have done with the old name and the old history, and I am now Ishmael, foreman of the works at the Rose Yard, Belleville.’

‘Sébastien—that poor little creature!’ she repeated, hardly comprehending the latter part of his speech. ‘Such a great tall dark fellow, with a black moustache, and the shoulders of a grenadier.’

Why, I must be getting an old woman. Figure to yourself then, Alphonse, this young man is the same I have told you about—whose mother—old songs, all that—and I was almost as fond of him as if he had been my own flesh and blood; and after his mother's death his father took him back to Brittany. But how comes it that you are in Paris, Sébastien, and wearing a blouse?’

‘Because I was not wanted at Pen-Hoël. My father has a wife and other sons. I was one too many. There was no place for me beside the hearth. So I cut the knot of the difficulty—an unloved son is a difficulty, you see—by coming to Paris, where I can earn my own living, and am in nobody's way.’

‘It was bravely done,’ said Lisette. ‘You have your poor mother's independent spirit.’

And then at the invitation of the *charcutier*, whose name was Alphonse Moque, Ishmael went home to supper with his old friend and her husband. They lived within two or three streets of the Palais de Cristal, in an old house in an old street, one of the little bits of old village architecture to be found here and there on the skirts of Paris. But though the shop and the rooms above it were low and small, they were smartly furnished and neatly kept. Madame

Moque was very proud of her home, and was of an industrious turn, now that she had a stake in the country. She served in the shop, she looked after the housekeeping, and at night she sang comic songs to a rapturous audience. Alphonse was proud of having secured such a versatile wife.

Ishmael sat late over the little supper-table in the warm, snug sitting-room, with its new mahogany furniture and bright yellow damask curtains, clock and candelabra in alabaster and gold—all paid for out of Lisette’s salary, as Monsieur Moque proudly stated. It was not that the *charcutier* did not earn money by his business; but the profits of the pork shop were of too serious a character to be frittered away upon furniture or fine clothes. Monsieur Moque’s superfluous cash went to the public funds, to make a provision for old age; but Lisette did what she liked with her professional earnings.

‘It was a bargain between us,’ said Alphonse, gazing at his wife with fatuous admiration. ‘I did not desire to be richer by my union with one of the most famous women in Paris. I only sought the honour of being allied to her, the glory of being able to tell the world that she is mine. If you knew how that stage door is sometimes be-

sieged of a night by men who come from the fashionable quarters of Paris—ah, from the Elysée itself—you would not wonder that I was uncivil to you,’ added Alphonse, excusing himself to Ishmael.

It was his dearest delusion that his wife’s footsteps were haunted by the fine flower of Parisian dissipation. He had an idea that the Prince-President himself had made particular inquiries about her, had suggested that she should be engaged at one of the boulevard theatres. But the inexorable malevolence of rival artists had prevented the gratification of that august desire.

Lisette smiled modestly, and murmured deprecatory little remarks now and then, reminding her husband that she was not so young as she had once been, that even beauty will fade, and so forth. But she appeared, on the whole, to believe in those shadowy rakes from the Boulevard des Capucines, who were supposed to haunt the stage door, but whom mortal man had never yet encountered.

Ishmael went back to his lodging in the early morning, pleased at having found a friend of the past, albeit that friend was associated with the darkest hours of his life. There had not been much brightness in his life hitherto; but

it seemed to him that a brighter day was now dawning, the beginning of a substantial success. His mind was full of plans, ideas, improvements, inventions; and, if there were indeed a time of gigantic enterprise at hand, he felt that for men of his stamp there must be plenty of work, and, with the work, golden opportunities.

Strong in his confidence in his own power, and buoyed up by hope, Ishmael's days and nights knew no weariness. He lived less in the present than in the future: every blow of hammer or mallet, every hour of toil, seemed to him a stage on the journey of his life, and whether the stage carried him an inch or a mile it was enough for him to know that he was always moving forward, that every day of labour was a day of progress.

2674/85.

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